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The WAYWARD MAN

ST. JOHN ERVINE

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THE WAYWARD MAN

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The WAYWARD MAN

By

ST. JOHN G ERVINE

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1927

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TO

LEONORA

THE FIRST PART

OF

THE WAYWARD MAN

News from a foreign country came
  As if my treasure and my wealth lay there;
So much it did my heart inflame,
  'Twas wont to call my Soul into mine ear;
    Which thither went to meet
      The approaching sweet,
    And on the threshold stood
    To entertain the unknown Good.
      It hover'd there
    As if 'twould leave mine ear,
    And was so eager to embrace
    The joyful tidings as they came,
    'Twould almost leave its dwelling-place
      To entertain the same.

THOMAS TRAHERNE.

THE WAYWARD MAN

THE FIRST CHAPTER

I

THE Terrace, which stood a short distance down Pottinger's Road from the new bridge over the Lagan, contained three shops, four parlour-houses, and a house which was neither one thing nor the other. In this last lived Mr. Lynas, the tailor. The front of his house looked like that of any other parlour-house, but if a passer-by had peeped through the window he would have seen, not, as he might have expected, a small d'oyley-covered table, bearing a pot of geraniums or perhaps a brass-bound Bible or a full-rigged ship inside a narrow bottle, but a counter bearing bales of cloth and possibly Mr. Lynas, who used to say to his neighbours that one of these days he really would have to ask Mr. Peden, the landlord, to give him a shop-front. But despite the promptings of his wife, an ambitious woman who resented the half-and-half appearance of her husband's business, Mr. Lynas never made the request, and when at last Mr. Peden, thinking of higher rents, resolved to convert all the parlour-houses into shops, Mr. Lynas was so angry that he abruptly departed from the Terrace to another part of the town and passed out of the knowledge of his neighbours.

The Terrace lay between Portugal Street and Modesty Row, and the order of its shops and houses was this. First, at the corner of Pottinger's Road and Portugal Street came Mr. Peden's Italian warehouse which was celebrated for two things: that it was the largest shop in the Terrace and that it was the business place of the man who owned the Terrace. Next to Mr. Peden's shop came Mrs. Dunwoody's, a dull and tiresome shop, her son Robert thought, with hardly a glimmer of glory in it. She dealt in hardware and delf and lamp-oil and brushes and a variety of things which were undoubtedly useful and necessary but could not be called either edible or enthralling. The Mineelys, now, on the other side of the street—people who did not live in the Terrace at all!—sold newspapers and sweets. There was a trade to engage the mind and the appetite! Robert many times flattened his nose until it was white against the Mineelys' window, and filled his thoughts with the wonders of a life spent in such surroundings. He could eat and read, read and eat! "And where would the profit be on that?" his elder brother Alec once wisely demanded. "Och, profit!" Robert roared with such scorn that Alec shrivelled away, murmuring, "Well, somebody has to think of them things sometimes!" There was always a large tray in the centre of the Mineelys' window, on which red and white cokernut chips were piled in a high heap, and Robert, who liked cokernut chips next to preserved ginger, would feel a sick envy of Jamesey Mineely who had had the good luck to be born of parents possessing so delectable a business. His faith in God had been badly shaken when a long and earnest prayer that his mother might be persuaded to give up

the sale of hardware and take to the sale of confectionery and papers remained unanswered. . . .

Following Mrs. Dunwoody's shop came the four parlour-houses, all of which were dull to look at, and, except the third, dully occupied. The exceptional parlour-house was inhabited by the Cairnduffs. Mrs. Cairnduff's father had been a Presbyterian minister in Derry, and she was considered to have married beneath her when she espoused the master of a small sailing-ship which tramped about the oceans of the world; but Mrs. Cairnduff did not share this opinion, nor could any one make her realise how she had fallen in society, so, after a while, no one tried. "Anyway, the woman's happy," was the conclusion to which people came when they talked about her marriage. She had one daughter, Brenda, who frequently wore a white dress on Sundays and was the first girl in the Terrace to be seen wearing brown stockings. She was strictly forbidden to play with the rough children in Modesty Row. Her playmates, among whom Alec and Robert Dunwoody were included, were carefully chosen by her mother so that there might be no chance of roughness coming into her conduct or her conversation. She always said, "I did so," when commoner children would have said, "I did." This was considered to be a great piece of refinement. She never said "Aye"; she always said "Yes." She called her mother "mamma" and her father "papa." She wore a white petticoat every day.

Alec was very fond of Brenda, but Robert liked to play with her only when her father was home from one of his long voyages.

"Do you think your da would tell us about his

trips?" he would say to Brenda, who would reply first, "I wish you wouldn't say 'Da,' Darkie!" and then, "I dare say!" Everybody called Robert "Darkie Dunwoody" because he was the only member of his family who had not got very fair hair.

"Och, sure, what's wrong with 'da'?" Darkie once demanded.

"It's common," said Brenda.

"You're always talkin' about common things," he complained.

"Well, I don't like common things or common people," she retorted.

Robert did not care much about Brenda—"She's a weeshy-weeshy sort of a girl," he told himself; but she liked him better than any other boy, and she begged her father to tell them a story of his trips abroad because she knew that then Robert would contentedly sit beside her, without wanting, at the end of a few minutes, to run away.

"It's funny you can't content yourself like Alec," she said to him once when he was restless. "Alec'll sit beside me as long as I'll let him."

"Och, Alec!" Robert replied, laughing at his brother. "Sure, he's an oul' Jenny-jo."

"You shouldn't talk that way about your brother!"

"An', forby, he's coortin' you," continued Robert, ignoring her interruption.

Brenda flushed and looked away. "You're awfully common sometimes," she said.

II

Mr. Lynas's half-and-half shop-and-house succeeded to the four parlour-houses, and was succeeded, last in

the Terrace, by Mr. Scarlett's shop. Mr. Peden's shop began the Terrace; Mr. Scarlett's shop ended it; and these were the two that interested Robert. The fact that they were described as the first and last was in itself sufficiently interesting. He remembered a cryptic reference to the first and the last in the Bible which had mystified him until he began to imagine that it might be explained in terms of Mr. Peden and Mr. Scarlett. It had mystified him because public-houses, notoriously kept by Roman Catholics, were sometimes called "The First and the Last," and he knew, for his mother had been careful to impress the fact on his mind, that public-houses were not reconcilable with the Word of God even when they were kept by Protestants. It was conceivable, as she suggested, that the reason why so many publicans were Catholics was because persons of that faith were forbidden by the priests to read the Bible for themselves, but she did not profess to understand these things. It was enough for her that there was a hint of hell in "The First and the Last," and everybody knew that the shortest way to damnation was through a public-house. It was also enough for her that Protestants believed in the Open Bible—a model of which was generally to be found dangling from Orange arches on the Twelfth of July—though, indeed, when she thought about it she realised that there were things in the Good Book which were better not talked about too loudly or too often. She *had* heard that a public-house was sometimes called "The First and the Last" for a reason unconnected with the Scripture, because it was the first to be encountered by countrymen coming into the town and the last to be passed on the way out again—thus giving them timely opportunity to get drunk both ways! . . .

But there were other and profounder reasons than these for Robert's delight in the first and the last shops in the Terrace. They had an air of romance which was missing from his mother's shop. Mr. Peden's was romantically named and it was bigger than Mrs. Dunwoody's. Robert could not understand why it was called an Italian warehouse, for there seemed to be no difference between it and any other grocery, but he did not greatly trouble himself with explanations. That it was called Italian was sufficient for him, and he would open his atlas and gaze at the boot-shaped map of Italy, with its heel in the Adriatic and its toe almost touching the rump of Sicily, and tell himself that it was next door. There was a volcano in Italy, and Robert would not in the least have been astonished if it had suddenly erupted in the middle of Mr. Peden's shop. The main entrance to the Italian warehouse was neatly placed on the corner, so that it was neither in Pottinger's Road nor in Portugal Street, and yet was in both. The window which looked on to the road contained the groceries; scuttles full of tea, and boxes of brown and lump and granulated sugar, and sometimes, about Christmas, large pieces of preserved peel. The window which looked into Portugal Street was less interesting; it contained provisions—bacon and ham and eggs and tins of corned beef. But even these were more entertaining than hardware and paraffin oil. Behind the shop were the store-rooms, full of corn-bins and bales and boxes. At one time Mr. Peden had lived over his shop, but the increase of his business had brought him an increase of pride and caused him to remove his family to a villa beyond "the Arches" in what was vaguely called "the country," and now the

upper rooms of the house were used as stores. Bags of flour and meal and bran filled what formerly was the drawing-room! An enchanting shop, Mr. Peden's, recalling the ends of the earth to Robert. Sam Peden would let him thrust the white scoop into the flour or bury his hands deep in the corn-bins or lift tea in a copper-coloured scoop from the stencilled wooden boxes in which it had been brought from India and China and Ceylon. There were pictures of tea-plantations on some of the boxes. Indian girls with big, dark eyes daintily gathered the tea-leaves or paced along sunlit roads with jars of water poised on their dusky heads! . . . There was nothing in his mother's shop to remind him of the wild and wasteful places of the world, but he could hardly turn round in Mr. Peden's shop without seeing something which had come from the hands of brown or black or yellow men.

There was romance, too, in Mr. Scarlett's shop, a smaller and less rambling one than Mr. Peden's. It also had two windows, but both of them looked on to Pottinger's Road. All that Mr. Scarlett had in Modesty Row, which was at his end of the Terrace, was a blank wall, broken only by his side-door, on which infuriated theologians scrawled insults to the Pope and sometimes indecencies which sent Mr. Scarlett trembling to his scullery for a bucket of water. The chief glory of Mr. Scarlett's windows was a coloured playbill of the piece being performed at the Theatre Royal. He received, so it was said, at regular intervals a free pass for two persons to the upper circle for exhibiting the play-bills, and Robert, when he discovered this, once waylaid the bill man and induced him to part with a poster. But Mrs. Dunwoody refused to exhibit

it in her window. "There's enough tomfoolery in the world already, without me adding to it," she said, thrusting the bill into the fire. "But you'll get a free pass for some of the plays," Robert said to tempt her. "Aye," he retorted, "for the ones nobody'll go to!"

Mr. Scarlett sold tobacco and pipes, and his windows were full of tobacco in bars and flakes and shreds, yellow and brown and black, to smoke and to chew. There were clay pipes and briar pipes and pipes made of meerschaum, with amber ends. Robert loved the yellow, shredded tobacco, called "Honeydew," but more for its name than for itself. His chief pleasure was in the black jars of loose tobacco, and Tom Logan, who was Mr. Scarlett's apprentice, would sometimes take down a jar and let him snuff up the smell. He would show him big, brown leaves of tobacco, like long withered docks, and pictures of plantations in Cuba, and tell him strange and incredible stories of cigars which cost as much as half a crown apiece. Kings and millionaires would smoke away a labourer's wages for a whole week in a single night! They would toss one-and-three-penceworth of cigar into the gutter with as little concern as Robert would show in tossing away an apple-core. That was magnificent and splendid extravagance to think about! Mrs. Dunwoody could not contain herself when he reported those legends of waste to her. "God'll make them rue it on the Last Day," she said in her horror. "D'you not think He wastes a bit Himself?" Robert innocently asked. Her eyes gaped as she listened to him. "Is that the way you speak of the Almighty God?" she demanded, slapping his face.

III

He did not go so often to Mr. Scarlett's shop—though Tom Logan was a born romancer—as he went to Mr. Peden's. There was a bogey-woman in it. Mr. Scarlett was a bachelor, possessed of an aged, bed-ridden, but determined mother who would not permit him to marry, nor did he dare to disobey her until she was dead and deeply buried in the city Graveyard. Only once did Robert see her, but the memory abided in his mind for the whole of his life. One Fair day, a bewildered bull, on its way to the market, ran amok and plunged headlong into Mr. Scarlett's shop, almost wrecking it. Mr. Scarlett was not an agile man, but he took a flying leap across his counter, and landed on Tom Logan who was lying on the floor. There was a swirl of smashed pipes and broken glass and heaving tobacco, out of which a lashing tail protruded, while the drovers, who were drunk, made unavailing noises of persuasion. One of them, a man with moist, drink-sodden eyes, coaxed the bull with incessant repetitions of, "Ah, come on, now, come on, like a good bull!" but, except that it lashed his face with its tail, it ignored him. Mr. Scarlett, realising that he was protected by the counter, rose from Tom Logan's chest and ordered the drover to take his bull out of that.

"This is no place for it," he said, a little impotently, adding that some one would have to pay for the damage that had been done.

The bull pawed the floor of the shop and then bellowed horribly. It thrust its horns into a large tobacco cabinet, dragging it with a clatter of broken glass to the ground, and then turned to gaze on Mr. Scarlett,

who wavered away from the counter, treading on Tom Logan's hand as he did so. "Take it away out of that!" he shouted.

"I will, sir, if you'll tell me how," said the drover, whom disaster had not sobered.

"It's not my business to tell you! . . ."

Another crash as the bull swept a great tray of pipes on to the floor. One of the constables in the crowd proposed to the sergeant of police that he should send for a rifle to shoot the beast, but before the sergeant could make up his mind whether to accept the suggestion or rebuke the proposer of it, Mr. Scarlett's kitchen-door was opened, and old Mrs. Scarlett, "looking like the Day of Judgment," appeared. She had a soiled nightcap on her crumpled gray hair, and a faded plaid shawl over her nightdress. She stood unsteadily for a few moments against the lintels of the door while she surveyed the scene, and then her blazing eyes met her son's. "You shouldn't be up, ma!" he began, but she turned impatiently away from him, and regarded the bull. "Shoosh on out of that!" she said, waving her gnarled hands at it. And amazingly the bull ceased to lash its tail, and allowed itself to be led away. Robert ran across the street as fast as his legs would carry him, and stood just inside the shop-door. He saw Mr. Scarlett shamefacedly come from behind the counter and try to meet his mother's eyes with some valour. He saw Mr. Scarlett's glance quaver and finally fall.

"You great gumph you!" the old woman said to her son. "You great, big gumph! And you that's afeard of a bull want to marry a wife! God pity you, you daft, demented man you!"

She went back to her bed, nor did she leave it again

until she was carried to the burial-ground. Robert saw her coffin being lowered from the upstairs window to the street—the stairs were too narrow and twisted for it to be brought down by them—and he thought to himself that she was being obstinate to the end, giving as much trouble as she could even on her way to her grave. Almost he expected her to sit up in her shroud and ask the funeral men if they thought that was any way to bury a decent woman!

The thought of her, while she lived, lying upstairs in the front room, grim and gray and able to subdue mad bulls, frightened Robert, and when he went to hear Tom Logan's romances and to fill his fists with shredded tobacco and snuff up the smell of it, he did so with some apprehension lest the kitchen-door should suddenly swing open, and the terrible old woman come and shoosh him away! He had made up his mind about her; she was a witch; and he had read and heard too much about witches and their ways to care greatly for their company.

IV

These were the shops that enthralled him. Another one, two terraces along Pottinger's Road, owned by Mr. Corcoran, the butcher and flesher, had some interest for him, too, but more on account of Mr. Corcoran's claim to be a purveyor of meat to the military than on account of his shop or its contents. Mr. Corcoran was a widower, and careless in his habits—his servant-girls nearly always had children by him—and there was a sound suspicion that the room behind his shop was dirty and neglected. Yet marvellously he announced to the neighbourhood in curly, golden letters on his

sign-board that he fed the troops. No one had ever seen the military buying meat from him, nor were any of the garrisons near his house, but he got advantage and reputation from the announcement, which, Mrs. Dunwoody said, might well be true, since he was more likely to visit the military with his meat than they were to visit him in search of it. Robert's respect for Mr. Corcoran was increased when he proposed to his mother, after a visit to Linden's tea-shop, that she should follow Linden's example and put the Royal Arms above the window. She told him that any one who did that without a warrant signed by the Queen's authority would be put in prison—and God alone knew when he would be let out again! Thereafter, he imagined Mr. Corcoran receiving copious correspondence from royalties and exalted generals, commanding him to supply them with a nice joint of beef or perhaps a plateful of chops. It was known to the world that Queen Victoria had a healthy appetite, God bless her, and why shouldn't she, and her with all the trouble of governing the country, and that she ate a chop every night of her life before going to bed. The labour of serving her alone, Robert realised, was hard, but when one added to it the feeding of her sons and their families and her regiments of soldiers, it was clear that Mr. Corcoran had his work cut out for him. Sometimes an immense pile of speckled sausages would lie on a large china plate in Mr. Corcoran's open window, and Robert, regarding them with awe and admiration, would say to Brenda Cairnduff or to himself, if he were alone, "Them's for the soldiers or mebbe the queen's family!" Once, when he had money, Brenda had dared him to go into the shop and offer to buy some of them, and he,

declining to be daunted by her, went in and rapped on the counter until Mr. Corcoran, looking sleepy-eyed, came into the shop.

"I want a half-pound of them sausages," he said, expecting to be arrested or ordered out of the shop.

Mr. Corcoran snipped off enough sausages to weigh down the scale, and wrapped them in newspaper. "Fippence!" he said; without a sign that he had sold the sausages of royalty to a common boy.

Robert left the shop, bewildered by his experience.

"What'll I do with them?" he said to Brenda.

"I don't believe they're for the queen at all," she answered.

"Aye, but what'll I do with them?" he repeated.

"We'll fry them for our tea," she said.

But the glamour of Mr. Corcoran's reputation survived that test, and Robert would watch him departing each morning in his light cart, which was rarely washed and always needed a coat of paint, and wonder to himself what bloody sights the butcher and flesher would see before the day was done. The slaughtering of cattle, for certain, but that was part of his occupation and hardly sufficient by itself to excite awe and wonder. He might, and this was Robert's darling hope, see fierce fighting in the soldiers' camps. He imagined that the training of recruits included the slaying of real people, so that the soldiers should not feel uncomfortable about killing when they went to a war. He had cause for this belief. John Kernaghan, who drove an outside car, had spent a short time in the militia, and had sworn, when spoken to about it, that he had been in the habit of shooting and stabbing and generally slaughtering as many as seven people a day during

his training at the Kinnegar, and that once the militia's manœuvres had been seriously hampered through a sudden shortage of killable people. Now Robert knew why the barracks were nearly always in Catholic neighbourhoods. The soldiers would naturally prefer to practise their killing on Papists than on good Protestants. For what other reason could their barracks be so convenient to the Catholic cemetery? Remembering what John Kernaghan had told him, Robert daily saw Mr. Corcoran depart on his rounds, and in his fancy followed him. He would be delivering a roast of meat to the colonel's wife, and while she was paying for it, he might see a couple of Catholics stabbed to death with bayonets or shot to pieces from a cannon. He had seen a picture once of executions in India. Sepoys were tied to the mouths of cannons! . . . Was it any wonder that a man accustomed to such sights as these in the course of his day's work sometimes forgot to wash himself and rarely remembered to wash his cart, and was unparticular about servant-girls?

Once, stealing into Mr. Corcoran's stable in the evening, he examined the cart-wheels to see if they were stained with blood; but there were no stains, and Robert acknowledged that even if there had been they might have been from the blood of cattle and not from the blood of Catholics.

V

He had many and singular thoughts about Catholics, who had the fascination of mysterious and forbidden people for him. Sometimes he peered through the windows of repositories at the crucifixes and scapulars

and rosaries and statues of saints and Holy Families and, most of all, the pictures of the Sacred Heart. These last oddly repelled him, though he could not have said why. There was Jesus, in a blue and red robe, pointing to a hole in His side, where a large and very regular heart was visible. Flames rose from it, and a wreath of thorns encircled its head. Great gouts of blood dropped from it, and a cross stood up from the flames! . . . There were similar pictures of the Virgin, whose Heart, sometimes, was pierced with swords. Robert, horribly fascinated by them, gazed at the pictures and felt sick. They made him remember the one-armed man who sat in the gutter of the Queen's Bridge and exposed his mutilation to the gaze of the charitable. Always, when he had approached this man, Robert had resolved to shut his eyes, but they could not close, and when he came abreast of the beggar, he felt himself, half-horrified, half-fascinated, gazing on the stump! The Holy pictures filled him with disgust, yet he was compelled to look at them. Trembling and awe-stricken, he would creep to the chapel-door and peep in at the symbols of idolatry. He was astonished to find himself enthralled by the clusters of candles at the Virgin't feet and the flickering red light burning before the altar. Once, when he saw the High Altar itself richly lit up, he went right into the chapel and, lest he should be discovered to be a Protestant prowling about in a Catholic church, he dipped his fingers in the holy-water stoup, and made the sign of the Cross and genuflected to the Host, as he had seen a woman do. He slipped into a seat, and became frightened when he found that he was kneeling near a confessional in which a priest was sitting. Supposing

the priests were to force him to confess his sins! . . . He hurried out of the chapel again, not daring to look behind him, but even in the street, surrounded by good Protestants, he could not forget the fascination of the lit candles at the Virgin's feet or the lovely light they made in the dusky chapel.

He knew the names of all the priests at St. Matthew's and could have told the name of the Catholic Bishop of the diocese when he did not know the name of the Episcopal Bishop. Nevertheless, despite the fascination of Catholicism for him, he had the queerest thoughts about Catholics. He believed them to be an inferior people. Unskilled labourers and servant-girls and publicans were Catholics; rich and respectable people were nearly always Protestants. That surely was sufficient proof for any one who had judgment. So certain was he of the general disreputability of Catholics that one day he charged Paddy Kane, for whom he had affection, with the crucifixion of Christ.

"We didn't," Paddy passionately protested.

"Ah, but you did," Robert replied. "The Bible says He was condemned and crucified by the Romans. You're a Roman! . . ."

Paddy, who was slow in his thoughts, had no answer ready for that, nor did he know how to retort when Robert discovered in the Catholic use of crucifixes a piece of shameless boasting, as if a Papist carried a Cross solely that he might be able to say, "Yes, we did that!"

"It's not true, I tell you," Paddy cried. "We don't——"

"Then why do you have crucifixes?" Robert demanded.

"It's—it's in memory of Him—to mind us about Him!"

"*We* don't have crucifixes, but we mind Him well enough!"

Then, because Paddy began to cry, Robert ceased to taunt him.

"Even if you are a Cathlik," he said, "I like you better'n anybody else!"

"All the same, it wasn't us that done it," Paddy insisted.

"Well, if you're sorry for it, that's all right," said Robert.

Brenda, listening in raptures to his argument with Paddy, sidled up to him and held his hand. 'You're an awfully good arguer," she murmured.

"Am I?" he said, drawing his hand away.

"Paddy can't argue at all——"

"You lave Paddy alone," he shouted at her, so that she blushed with vexation. He turned to Paddy. "Come on," he said. "Come on home with me, an' mebbe my ma'll give us our tay together!"

Brenda hesitated for a second. Then she said, "Let me come, too, Darkie?"

"No," he replied. "I don't want you. Standin' there, makin' little of Paddy!"

"You made little of him yourself."

"I didn't. I just toul' him what I thought of the Cathliks. I wouldn't make little of him. Would I, Paddy?"

"No," said Paddy. "But you shouldn't make little of my religion."

"Well, I won't any more. Come on!"

Nevertheless, his thoughts about Catholics continued

to be odd, and it did not appear to him incredible or wrong that they should be used by soldiers for bayonet-practice, though he cried terribly when he reflected that Paddy might some day be destroyed by a militiaman.

VI

Mrs. Dunwoody's shop was, undoubtedly, the dullest that Robert knew, but there were times when even it was enthralling to him. For two weeks in the year, at the Twelfth of July and at Christmas, the hardware shop became interesting and romantic. In July, the window and the greater part of the shop were filled with toy drums and paper Orange sashes. All the Protestant boys and many of the Protestant girls, if they were not to be suspected of poverty or infidelity to their faith, had to be provided with drums and sashes for the Twelfth, and Robert's recollection of the festival was for ever associated with masses of drums and piles of paper sashes. There were big drums and little drums —drums that a boy of fourteen could thump without smashing the skins, and drums that a baby, still sucking its comforter, could manage to hold and to beat. Robert never had any wish to own a drum, for mere banging and noise seemed poor entertainment to him, but he loved to watch the stock of drums steadily being diminished as the Twelfth drew near. The eleventh night was the great night, for then the last and most vigorous rush for drums was made. He would stand outside the shop, looking into the window where the drums were piled in columns that reached from the floor to the ceiling, and wait for them to disappear. First, his mother and his elder brother, Alec, would

work their way through the stock in the shop. Then, the shop depleted, would come the thrilling moment when Alec would mount the step-ladder and take down the first drum from the nearest pile in the window, and then the next and the next, until there were no more drums left. The shop remained open very late on the eleventh night, and Robert was allowed to stay out of bed long after his time for retiring because there was no one free to look after him. Up the road, men were erecting an orange arch, made of dyed shavings, slinging it from Jimmy Cæsar's chimney to the chimney on McBratney's shop, but even this excitement did not serve to allure him for long from the thrilling window. His heart would beat faster as he saw the last column of drums dwindling. Would the final drum of all be sold? Would the window be emptied? He loved to see it stripped bare, and would say to himself when it was, "There, that lot's done with! Nothing's left. We can start all over again, with everything fresh and new!" If the last drum should remain unsold, his mother would give it to him, but he never wished it to remain unsold so that he might have it. Ardently he desired it to be bought. Had no purchaser appeared, and he had had the money, he would have bribed a boy to buy it so that he might not be cheated out of his pleasure in the depleted window. . . . When, at last and very late, all the drums and sashes were sold, he would go into the shop and find his mother and Alec sitting behind the counter, worn out. The cash-drawer would be drawn from its socket so that Mrs. Dunwoody might more comfortably count and separate the coins; the pennies and sixpences and rarer half-crowns. Now and then, a dirty pound note would be taken from a

little recess at the back of the drawer. When all the coins had been counted, the pennies stacked into columns of a shilling each, the shillings into columns of a pound, Mrs. Dunwoody would announce the grand total. This was her privilege and was not to be usurped by any one. Alec, having helped with the counting and casting, already knew what the total was, but he was aware of his duty and affected not to know it. He leant forward almost as eagerly as Robert, to hear his mother's announcement. "Two shillings more than last Twelfth!" she would add, when she had stated the total, or, "Three-and-sixpence less this year than last!" The heap of coins meant little to Robert as money, but much as excitement. He would look at his mother's fingers, cut, sometimes, through too hasty handling of the drums, and take pride in them; honourable wounds sustained in the great effort to empty the window. When he went to bed, he dreamt of mountains of drums being torn down by his mother and Alec while mountains of pennies and shillings rose up in their place.

There was greater excitement at Christmas, for then the window was decorated with frosted holly and cotton wool, and there was a large, mechanical toy performing in the centre of the Christmas goods. Mrs. Dunwoody thought carefully and for a long while about each year's mechanical toy. It had to be different from its predecessor and more unusual than any other toy in the road. Early in November, Robert began to wonder what surprise she would spring on her customers at Christmas, but he did not dare to ask her for a hint of it, partly because he himself was anxious to be astonished, but chiefly because he was afraid to. Once,

in his excitement, he had given away the secret of the coming toy to the daughter of one of his mother's rivals, and her carefully-planned surprise had been ruined because her rival had bought an exactly similar toy and exhibited it to the public two days before hers was due to be displayed. There was no toy at all in her window that year, and Robert's remorse caused him to hold his tongue about novelties ever after. At Christmas, as at the Twelfth, he loved to see the window being emptied until at last there was left only the mechanical toy, still performing its tricks as if the window were full. He then went happily to bed, hanging his stocking on the post with as much expectation as if he did not know exactly what would be in it on Christmas morning. There would be some pennies and a shilling—the latter of no earthly use to him since it was immediately buried in the Post Office Savings Bank—and an apple and an orange and some sweets. A book would be tied to the bed-rail. Down at the bottom of the stocking, stretching from heel to toe, would be a toy pistol and some paper caps to fire in it. The pistol appeared in the stocking each year, but Robert felt no resentment over that. Immediately he was awake, he would open the stocking, seize the pistol and, having loaded it with one of the paper caps, would fire it close to Alec's ear. His brother, tired by his work, would leap up with a start, exclaiming, "My God Almighty, what's happened!" and then, seeing Robert laughing beside him, would add, "I'll cut the legs off you, disturbin' me like that!" and lie down again. Robert always laughed to himself for a long time after Alec had fallen asleep. "I scared him again," he would whisper to the bedclothes. "I scared the wits out of

him. He near jumped out of his skin with the fright I gave him!" But scaring Alec was easy.

VII

At the back of the Terrace was a hall which had formerly been Mr. Peden's stable, but was now a Salvation Army "barracks." Its shape was so irregular that it could not be described. It bellied out in the centre, and had a platform at one end, low in front and high behind. The penitent-form was immediately in front of the platform, and here the saved and repentant sinners knelt in an agony of remorse and offered themselves for redemption. The "barracks" had a thin roof, made of tarred felt stretched across light rafters. It was a leaky roof, and on wet nights the rain dribbled through the felt and splashed on the floor below. In the winter, when the stove was alight, drops of rain would sometimes fall on the hot lid and make a loud sizzling sound until they had evaporated. Very rarely did the officer in command fail to illustrate the tortures of the damned by the raindrops on the stove. "That's how you'll sizzle in hell if you don't get right with God!" Nevertheless, the gospel of the Army was a cheerful one, and there was more singing than moaning in the meetings, and the soldiers laughed oftener than they groaned. A narrow entry separated the houses in the Terrace from the Army "barracks," and Robert was able now and then to steal out of his mother's back door and climb up a low wall which led to the roof of the "barracks." He would scramble close to the sloping window, pulled open by cords, and listen to the meeting. This was a better way of listening than

sitting in the hall itself, but he had to be careful not to be seen, for his mother had forbidden him to climb on to the roof. He liked the Army meetings better than the Presbyterian service which he was compelled to attend every Sunday morning. The Army had officers and soldiers in uniform—blue tunics and bright red jerseys, emblazoned with the burning sign of Blood and Fire. The worshippers were not called a congregation; they were called a corps. They had a band and a brilliant flag, and the women soldiers carried jingling tambourines. Some of the young soldiers were being taught to play the flute! . . .

The singing was hearty and abundant, with hymns set sometimes to music-hall tunes that were jolly to listen to. Even when the hymn was mournful, it was heartily mournful. The band would play with all its force; the tambourines would be jingled in some sort of harmony; and those of the soldiers who were not in the band and had no tambourines would clap their hands together while they sang. A jolly religion! There were meetings every night, and three meetings on Sunday. Mrs. Dunwoody sometimes went to the Army meetings on week-nights, but never on the Sabbath when her own church, she said, demanded her presence, but she liked to see Robert going to them, despite his deplorable custom of getting "saved" during specially interesting meetings. "I'm glad you're saved, son," she said to him once when he had returned to her from the penitent-form, "but there's no need to do it so often. God knows all about you, and He'll mebbe think it disrespectful of you if you make a habit of it!" He did not dare to tell her on that occasion that he had got "saved" simply for effect. An old man had stum-

bled to the penitent-form, leaving a gap between him and the next person who had "given himself to Jesus." That was the only vacant place at the penitent-form, and suddenly Robert thought that if he were to fill it, the captain, perceiving the old man and the young boy kneeling side by side, would exclaim dramatically, "God has room for everybody, the young and the old. Look, brothers and sisters, at this young child and this old man begging for mercy at His holy feet! . . ." Tears filled his eyes as he pictured the scene and he rose up and went to the penitent-form and knelt down by the old sinner's side. He covered his face with his hands and sobbed aloud. There was intense emotion in the meeting, and Robert was overcome by it, but he did not forget to listen for the words which he was sure would soon be said—and presently the captain said them! His certainty that they would be spoken convinced him of God's presence. Who else but God could have put into his head the idea of getting "saved" at that moment or have made him feel so certain that the captain would publicly refer to his conversion? He knew that the angels were flying through the heavens, singing hallelulias of joy over his salvation. The hosts of Heaven were specially observing this one out of all the redeemed sinners of the world! . . . Nor was his pride reduced when one of the soldiers coming to wrestle with his soul, recognised him as the inveterate penitent, and said in disgust, "Och, it's you again, is it?" and passed on to the next sinner. What did it matter to him that the saving soldier disbelieved in his redemption? Had it not worked out as he had anticipated? Was he not exalted by it? He returned to his mother, uplifted and full of glory. . . .

But more than the meetings, he loved listening to

them from the roof, and would long have continued to listen to them from that perilous perch had it not been for the night of disaster. On a Sunday night, when Mrs. Dunwoody and Alec were at church together, and he was left at home with his sisters, Mattie and Margaret, he waited until they were busy with books and stole out of the back door into the entry and climbed on to the Army roof, where he lay at his length, listening to the singing and the tambourines and the beating of the drums until the supreme moment when the testimonies were given and the saved sinners declared what wicked acts they had done before their conversion. Paddy Gallagher, a genial, kindly soul, had been in the habit, so he said, of throwing his wife out of an upstairs window every Saturday night until God got a grip of him, praise His Holy Name, and brought him to his knees. Never once since that happy day had he thrown Mrs. Gallagher out of the window. And what God had done for him, He could do for the worst of them! . . . When the testimonies had been delivered, the captain began an emotional address in which he described the bliss of the saved and the misery of the damned. Then the soldiers of the platform descended upon the unsaved in the body of the "barracks" and urged them to come to God. The captain, in a crooning voice, started a hymn:—

> You'll see the Great White Throne
> And stand before it all alone,
> Waiting for the Judge to call
> When the stars begin to fall.

The saved and the unsaved sang the chorus:—

> My God, what a morning, morning, morning,
> My God, what a morning when the stars begin to fall.

The hall was packed with unregenerate men and women, and Captain Clifford, an appealing preacher, felt waves of emotion pouring through him. This was to be the greatest night in that corps. The Holy Ghost was present—he was certain of the Spirit's presence, and he became more and more fervent in his appeals, so that the unsaved were intensely stirred. Robert, lying on the roof, could hear him counting the converts as they streamed to the penitent-form, and, peering through the window, saw that there was a double row of sinners already offered for redemption.

"Hallelulia! Another soul for Jesus! That makes fifteen for God; Five more'll make twenty, and a heavy defeat for the Devil! Five more for glory. Who'll be the first candidate for heaven? God offers you a free pass to everlasting joy! Oh, there's grace abounding here this night. I can feel God groping for His own! . . . Ah, here comes another! And another! Glory be to God! Glory be to God! . . ."

Robert, hauling himself closer to the window, saw a man reeling up the hall, and heard him shouting, "I'm a Cathlik, but, dammit, I'll get saved, too!" Captain Clifford asssured the sinner that God was not particular. "Catholics or Protestants, it's all one to Him. He can save anybody or anything. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give ye rest. That doesn't just mean Catholics or Protestants. It means the whole wide world; brown, black, red, white, and yellow! . . ." With that, the Catholic was hauled out of hell into heaven. The hymn was started again. "My God, what a morning, morning, morning, my God, what a morning when the stars begin to fall." Suddenly, there was a commotion in the middle of the hall; a drunkard was seized with delirium tremens.

He stood up in his seat, pale and perspiring, and yelled with fear. The devil was after him. The devil had got a hold of him and was hauling him down to hell. He wanted to be saved, but the devil would not let him be saved. Wouldn't the captain come and help to rescue him from hell? . . . There was a tremendous stir in the hall, and Captain Clifford, feeling that this was a task for him and not for the rank and file, descended from the platform so that he might wrestle with the Evil One for the man's soul. Robert, straining at the window, could just see the sinner in the crowd of soldiers who were begging him to come to Jesus. They closed in on him, led by their captain, and shut him out from Robert's view, but not from his hearing. The unhappy drunkard was piteously asserting that he did not want to go to hell, and Robert, now persuaded that the devil was clawing at him and dragging him out of the arms of God and Captain Clifford, carelessly shifted himself on the tarred felt so that he might better behold the fearful and enthralling sight. He was so intent on seeing the devil that he did not hear the felt sagging and ripping beneath him. It parted, and with a shriek he fell through the roof into the middle of the throng of excited saints and sinners. A yell of terror burst from the delirious drunkard as Robert's body landed at his feet, and he rose up, foaming at the mouth, and flung himself almost in a single bound on the penitent-form with prayers for pity that nearly rent the heavens as Robert had rent the roof! . . .

VIII

When Robert had recovered from his bruises and his fright, his mother solemnly beat him with the tawse.

Captain Clifford's plea that he should be forgiven because he had been an instrument for good was disregarded by her. Undoubtedly Robert had precipitated the drunkard into the arms of Jesus, but he had done so unintentionally. Times without number, she had forbidden him to climb on to the Army roof. It was bad enough for him to climb on to an ordinary roof, but to climb there, "peeping at God like that!" was unforgivable, even when, as on this occasion, God had used him to pluck a brand from the burning. So she beat him with the leather tawse. But he did not complain or care. The strokes on his bare pelt were painful, but he did not shed a tear. The drunkard had miraculously recovered from his delirium and was now a saved, if shaken, man; and Robert had been the instrument chosen by God Himself to perform this miracle. Almost he rejoiced in his beating, and when his mother, suddenly anxious for him, said, "Am I hurting you, chile dear?" he proudly replied, "Yes, ma, but I'm not mindin' it!" Immediately she threw down the leather tawse and hugged him. "I know what I'll do with you," she said, "I'll make a minister of you!" Then, as suddenly as she had hugged him, she thrust him from her. "Kneel down," she said, "and ask God to keep you from feelin' too proud of yourself!" He knelt down, as she bade him, and repeated the words which she dictated, that he might be delivered from spiritual pride and grow up, humbly and meekly, to serve the Lord. But there was no power in his petition, for he was full of pride.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

I

PEOPLE said of Mrs. Dunwoody that she was a masterful woman. "She's entitled to anybody's respect." Sometimes, when she looked up from her ledger and surveyed her shop, a thrill of pride would run through her body. She had created a thriving business without the help of any man. Her manners and her thoughts were modest, but she could not refrain from boasting to herself—for she would not boast to any one else—when she remembered that she had reared four young children, suddenly bereft of their father who had been drowned with his crew in the Eastern Pacific, and had founded and maintained this flourishing shop. More than once she had nearly been daunted, but she had kept her courage and now her reward was sure and ample. Her eldest son, Alec, was a sober and civil and industrious lad, coming up to twenty, amenable to her bidding and ready to take the heaviest part of her work. The two girls, Mattie and Margaret, were well enough. Mattie, the elder and a year younger than Alec, was the pretty one of the family, and aware of it, too. She was not so amenable to her mother as Alec was, but she was amenable enough for a good-looking girl. A suspicion occasionally crossed Mrs. Dunwoody's mind that she would have trouble with Mattie, who had a stiff

temper that was rarely shown and hard to conquer. But Mattie, on the whole, was manageable. So, too, was Margaret, now seventeen and plain like Mrs. Dunwoody herself; a pale, thin-featured girl, with light blue eyes and a quick, running sort of laugh that people liked. Her temper was as quick as her laugh, and she had a great deal to say for herself and often merited her mother's rebuke: "You have as many opinions as would sink a ship!" She read books. Twice every week she walked across the bridge and along the Sand Quay to the Free Library in the centre of the city where she borrowed a novel that might be good, but was more likely to be daring. There was one story she had brought home, called *The Sorrows of Satan!* . . . Mrs. Dunwoody had sternly bidden Margaret to take the dreadful book back again, and had thought, for awhile, of sending a letter to the Lord Mayor and Corporation to ask them if they realised on what sort of literature the rates were being squandered. When she was Margaret's age and had bothered to read anything, she had read *Only a Chestnut Burr* and *Jessica's First Prayer* and *The Lamplighter* and *Christy's Old Organ*—good religious stories, well larded with texts and improving sentiments. Margaret yawned over *Christy's Old Organ,* but yawn as she might she would not be allowed to bring books like *The Sorrows of Satan* into the house! . . . Mrs. Dunwoody did not discover until some months had elapsed that Margaret had concealed the shameful story in her bedroom and had read it there while her mother was busy in the shop. She had even read parts of it aloud to Mattie, and Mattie, so amenable to authority, had shamelessly listened! . . . A difficult girl, Margaret, but Mrs. Dunwoody did not

expect to have serious trouble with her. She would be a poor sort of a mother, she said to herself, if she could not handle a daughter or two.

It was Robert, her youngest child, three years younger than Margaret, who deeply troubled her thoughts. He was her dearest child, her heart's darling, born after his father's drowning, and she had put her pride in him. Alec's career was plain enough; a good, careful, obedient son who would carry on her business for her and ensure the comfort of her old age. Mattie and Margaret would marry sensible, well-set-up and prospering men of her own choice, and would live near her so that she might easily and often see her grandchildren. These three were to be solid members of her family, contenting themselves with keeping what she had made as safe and as sound as she had made it. But Robert was destined to do more than this for her; he was to exalt her name and restore pride to her family. The boy had brains, and if only he would consent to use them well! . . . She rubbed her chin with a forefinger. Would he use them well? There was a wild and wayward strain in him that filled her with dismay and apprehension. The schoolmaster said that Robert could learn well enough when he tried, but that he seldom tried. "He hasn't the patience, Mrs. Dunwoody. His mind's never on what he's doing, and if you ask him what it *is* on, he doesn't know. He's the fearfullest wee fellow for letting his imagination wander. When he's in the mood for learning, nobody can beat him——!"

"Can't you keep him in the mood?" she interrupted, feeling that this should be easy work for a schoolmaster, armed as he was with authority and a rod.

"Can you keep water from running through your fingers?" Mr. Gebbie replied.

"No," she answered, "but Robert's not water."

"I'm not so sure about that. Anyway, whatever he learns, he'll learn for himself in his own way. I can give a good guess at what'll happen to the majority of the children that goes through my hands, Mrs. Dunwoody, for indeed, we're near all of a pattern, but I wouldn't take the risk of guessing about Robert."

"D'you think he'd make a minister?"

"He might. But then, he might not. Whatever he does, he'll be a bit disconcerting——!"

II

The talk with Mr. Gebbie made Mrs. Dunwoody uneasy. She loved authority, and she had an excessive pride in her family which made her wish to keep her children about her even when, in due time, they should marry. Her reading rarely went beyond the *Evening Telegraph* and the Old Testament. As she turned over the pages of the big Bible, bound and clasped in brass, and read about the prolific Jews who were so unaccountably chosen to be God's people, she told herself that none of them had so much pride of family and desire for parental authority as she had. She would have enjoyed being a ruler in Israel. To sit before her tent in the evening time, with her children and her children's children and their flocks and herds circling around her, would have given her immeasurable joy. She rarely read the New Testament, but the Old was seldom from her thoughts. No one had ever heard her say how profoundly shocked she was when she read for

the first time Christ's reply to the announcement that His mother and brethren waited outside. "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" She could not have acknowledged that Christ's disregard of family life made her prefer the Old Testament to the New, because she was not aware of her preference, but it was a fact that she felt happy with the latter only when she came upon the genealogies. She loved the stories of the patriarchs and got intense pleasure from reading aloud the long list of "begats." The first chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew thrilled her. She felt that it properly belonged to the book of Genesis, that it was misplaced in the New Testament. "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Pharos and Zara of Thamar; and Pharos begat Esrom, and Esrom begat Aram." She almost licked the "begats" with her lips and tongue as she slowly rolled them out of her mouth. "There's family for you!" she would say. "There was great quality and length of years in them people!" Margaret, impatiently listening, once replied, "It's a queer thing never to mention their mothers. Nobody but their oul' das!"

"Wheesht, daughter dear," Mrs. Dunwoody commanded. "That's no way to talk of the Bible."

"All the same, Bible or no Bible," Margaret continued, undaunted, "I think they ought to say something about their mothers and their daughters. You'd near think them people come into the world without a woman near the house."

Mrs. Dunwoody, who had secretly sympathised with Margaret's opinion—was she not herself an example of a woman who had reared and sustained a fine family?

—could not allow this freedom of speech to go unchecked. "You're ondacent, girl," she said, "and you can just go to your bed this minit and ask God's forgiveness."

"All the same——" Margaret began, but her mother would not listen to her. "Away wi' ye," she said, and Margaret, remembering a novel under her bed, went.

Mrs. Dunwoody sometimes let it be known that she was descended from a Downshire gentleman who owned land and let it to farmers, one of whom became her grandfather. Her grandmother had committed the mortal sin of marrying beneath her, and had been ignored by her father and his family ever afterwards. But although the De Lacys and their recognised descendants disdained to know Mrs. Dunwoody, if, indeed, they were aware of her existence, they could not keep their blood out of her veins, and she proudly exhibited to those who would look the signs of her good descent. When Robert spoke to her once of the eminence of Mr. Peden—eminent because his shop was bigger than hers and he lived in a detached villa in the country—she laughed and held out her fine, shapely hands and bade him observe what the hands of people of quality were like.

"Look at my lips," she said. "And my face. Can't you tell by my face?"

She made him aware of his own shapely hands, and told him that he had a look of breeding seen only in those who had "the quality" in them. "Mr. Peden's a nice, dacent man," she admitted, "but he hasn't the quality in him. His family's nothing. His grandfather was a clauber-man—not," she hurriedly added, "that I'm making little of him for that. I'm not. But there's

a queer differs atween them that's up and them that's going up, and the differs is quality, son!"

Robert could not detect this difference, and his failure distressed her. He said it was finer to be Mr. Peden, rising from an ancestry of scavengers and street-sweepers, than to be Mrs. Dunwoody, living on her unacknowledged descent from a landed gentleman. He could not easily explain his belief to her, chiefly because she was impatient about it, but he made her understand that he was not deeply impressed by his distant relationship to the De Lacys and that he was immensely impressed by the importance of Mr. Peden. Once, at a public function in the Ulster Hall, he had seen the Mr. De Lacy of that time, and had remained unstirred by the spectacle. "I'd rather have Mr. Peden any day," he said. "Sure, thon's a dreepy-drippy sort of a man! . . ."

None of her children shared her family pride, but Robert's failure to share it distressed her more than the failure of Alec or the girls. They were Dunwoodys, she said to herself, with more of their father in them than of her, and they must live like Dunwoodys, decent and civil; but Robert was a De Lacy and must rise to the De Lacey level. She closely watched him for signs of "the quality" and strove, as best she could, to strip him of Dunwoodyness. When she came upon him studying maps and tracing rivers from their source to the sea, she rebuked him for wasting his time, not because she thought he was wasting it, but because she found signs of his father in this map-reading and wished to remove them. The thought that Robert might follow his father to sea sent her shuddering to her knees. . . . This wandering about the oceans of the

world filled her with fear and disgust. She had lost her husband because he could not content himself in one place, and she had no wish to lose her son. It was not only the recollection of her drowned husband, whom she had loved and by whom she had been loved, that made her unwilling to think of Robert as a sailor. She frequently announced her wish that people would "stay in their own place." Half of her life had been spent in Donaghreagh, where she was born, and the other half in Belfast. Donaghreagh remained in her memory as a dear affection, but her visits to it, after her removal to Belfast, had been infrequent and widely separated from each other. Travelling even so short a distance as that was not to her taste. Death, indeed, was the chief cause of her journeys, for she was punctilious about the duties of the living to the dead, and she would take much trouble to "pay respect" to some dead person whom she had known in her youth, though possibly she had not seen him or her for many years. A few times, she had been persuaded to spend a day at Pickie or Ballyards, but these were all. She got no pleasure from "trips"; she preferred to stay in her own place. So it was that she rarely took journeys. Belfast is partly in Antrim and partly in Down, but for her there was only Down. She had never been in any part of Antrim except that which was contained in Belfast, and although she had heard of Portrush and Dublin and London and New York and queer places with queer names she had no wish to see them. "What would I go trapesing there for?" she said when some one suggested that she should visit Dublin. "I know nobody there." That was her conclusive retort to all suggestions of travel. She knew nobody there. When Mr.

Peden went to the Ulster Convention in London during a Home Rule agitation, she surmised that the principal difference between London and Belfast was that London was bigger. "An' mebbe lonelier!" When Robert came running from Scarlett's shop, his head full of yarns spun for him by Tom Logan, or from Mr. Peden's to tell her of the wonders of China and Japan, she would listen without interest and chill his romance by saying, "Them places is all very well for the ones that have to live in them, but what would we be doin' there an' us not knowin' a soul?"

"But they're wonderful places, ma!" Robert insisted.

"Any place is wonderful if you don't live in it," she retorted. "I dare say the Chinamen think Belfast's the marvel of the world! Content yourself, son, in your own place, and don't go fillin' your mind with nonsensical nonsense. Everybody should stay where they're put, an' not go trampin' up and down the earth as if they couldn't rest anywhere."

That was her deepest conviction, that every one should stay in his own country with his own kin. If necessity compelled a man to leave the place where he was born, he should go where he was likely to find some of his friends. Mrs. Mercer's sons had emigrated, one after the other, until at last she, too, followed her eldest boy to Canada, where she died fretting for her home. Her second son had gone to the United States—"as far, seemingly, as he could get from his brother,"—one was in Australia, and the youngest was in South Africa. "It's strange them leavin' their own country," Mrs. Dunwoody remarked, "but it's stranger still them not all goin' thegether to the one country. You'd near think they wanted to separate their family." That any

family should wish to disperse was a problem which she found hard to solve, but it was incredible to her that her own family should wish to disperse. When she forecast the future, she saw her life unfolding itself in her children, each of whom would be established in reputation and pride and prosperity by her side, with Robert as the brightest jewel in her crown. The name of the Dunwoodys would be famous in Ulster, and a day would come when the proud De Lacys would thankfully acknowledge them! Who knew but Robert would bring the Dunwoodys and the De Lacys into closer kindred by marrying the young De Lacy's daughter. . . .

III

Her business was increasing. Her cautious mind could no longer deny the increase or the unlikelihood that it might be converted into decline. Before long she would have to yield to Alec's suggestion that she should knock down the wall which separated the shop from the kitchen and double the size of the shop. The plan was already made, but she had been reluctant to act on it, because the kitchen had kindly memories for her. But Alec was right and wise. The wall must be pulled down. The return-room at the top of the first flight of stairs could be converted into a kitchen. When that was done, the whole of the ground-floor would be available for the sale of hardware, and her efforts to extend her trade would not be crippled by lack of room. She acknowledged to herself that the change ought to have been made a year or two before, but the loss of time did not seriously matter, for she had consolidated

her trade and had not expended capital before she could safely do so. If the conversion were made now, the cost of it would be recovered before the time came when Robert must go to a more expensive school, and she would not then be hampered in her plans for him by lack of money. She called to Alec.

"Come here, son," she said.

He came from the street-door, and as she looked at him she thought how strange it was that Robert and he should be brothers. He had mild, gray eyes in which there was no sparkle—"like his Aunt Fanny's!" she said to herself—and his flat, white face had a flabby look, although it was not flabby. His faintly fair moustache seemed to be dribbling from his mouth, like weather-beaten tufts of gray grass, and when he spoke there was a fretful note in his voice that vaguely irritated his mother and caused her to tell herself that he was "an oul' Jenny-jo." Alec was extraordinarily submissive to his mother, desiring, or so it seemed, no will but hers, and almost girlishly eager to fulfil her wishes. Robert had none of his brother's submission to her authority. He seemed, sometimes, to be set on defying her. But Robert was her darling, and she found herself comparing the two boys always to the disadvantage of the elder. "If Alec was more like Robert, and Robert was more like Alec, I'd be the happy woman," she thought.

"Yes, ma," Alec said, standing before her.

Suddenly she felt impatient with him, observing for the first time that one side of his dribbling moustache was longer than the other. She wished he would have it properly trimmed and that he would remember his appearance. It did not seem right to her that one of

her family should be careless of his looks. "But he's a good and amenable son," she said to herself, as if she were excusing him.

She described her plan to him.

"It would mebbe be better to open a branch shop," he said, "and leave this one alone."

"A branch! What put that notion into your mind?"

"I was thinkin' when you wouldn't pull the wall down before that mebbe you were right, an' we'd do better with a branch. Mattie an' you could manage this, an' I could look after the branch with a bit of help from Margaret on a Friday an' a Saturday."

"I had no notion of a branch," Mrs. Dunwoody said, dallying with the idea.

It was made clear to her that Alec had thought much about a branch, that the dearest dream of Alec's life now was that he might open a shop, subordinate to his mother's, but under his control. Mrs. Dunwoody thought for a few moments.

"No," she said decisively, "I don't like the idea—not yet awhile anyway. We'll enlarge this one first, an' then mebbe we'll think about a branch. We've a certain sure trade here, an' I don't want to take any risks for the present. You see, Alec, I have Robert's future to think about."

"It's just as you say, ma!" said Alec, unable to keep the note of disappointment out of his voice.

"You sound disappointed, Alec!" she exclaimed.

"Well, I am, ma, but of course I'll agree to whatever you say. I dare say you're right, too."

She considered. "I think I am," she replied, "but I'll not forget the idea. It's a good one. Had you any thought in your head where the branch might be?"

"Cromac Street," he answered.

She looked at him in astonishment, and then laughed. This was unusual decision in Alec. "You appear to have made up your mind about it all," she said. "I suppose you know the very shop you want? . . ."

"Yes, ma, I do. I've been askin' a wheen of questions from time to time, an' the man that has this shop isn't doin' well in it! . . ."

"That's no recommendation to me, Alec."

"It's his own fault. He drinks an' bets an' plays devil's cards, an' neglects his business."

"That's it, is it?"

"Aye. I think I could do well with it. The shop's in a very good position, with a lot of traffic passin' the door. The trams stop forenenst it."

"H'm! Well, I'll think about it. Keep your eyes open an' tell me what goes on. In the meantime, we'll have this wall down."

"Yes, ma."

They made plans and calculations, and then, irrelevantly, she said, "I suppose that man'll go bankrupt soon?"

He knew to whom she referred. "I should say he's near that already. Dacent enough sort of a man, but no control over himself. Always after this an' after that, an' never the same two minutes runnin'! . . ."

"Aye, indeed," Mrs. Dunwoody murmured.

"Just like Robert," said Alec.

She glanced at him sharply. "What's that you say?" she said.

"I said he was just like Robert. No stability."

"What makes you talk that way of your brother, an' him little more nor a child?" she angrily demanded.

"He has his nature for all that, ma, child or no child. You know rightly he's runnin' daft after one thing an' another, fillin' his head wi' talk——" There was terrible contempt in his tone when he said the word "talk." "You don't know the half about him I know. He's always talking to me about ships an' foreign countries an' adventures an' God alone knows what. Tom Logan is always crackin' on to him about travellin'—that's the latest notion—an' he's half astray in the head with the talk."

Mrs. Dunwoody did not immediately reply, and when she did, she spoke as if she were unconcerned. "Robert's right enough," she said. "Anyway, he's young yet."

"Mebbe," Alec answered, "but the kind of talk he's fond of 'll be no good til him in business or in the pulpit either, for that matter. It's sensible talk he needs, not *talk!*"

"Well, he'll be goin' to a bigger school soon, an' I dare say he'll amend his ways when he gets there."

"I hope so," said Alec in a tone that had no hope in it. "It's a pity he doesn't take more interest in the business. I wish he took the interest I do. Him an' me might run a branch or two atween us! . . ."

"I'm not thinkin' of puttin' Robert into business," his mother replied. "You know that well enough, Alec, an' there's no need for me to remind you of my intention."

At that moment, Robert came running from the street.

"Ma," he said to his mother, "would you believe the like of this? Tom Logan says there's places in the

world where you dig a scoop in the water and bring up lumps of gold——!"

"Ah, wheesht with you," Mrs. Dunwoody angrily exclaimed. "That fellow Logan's demented."

IV

The conversion of the kitchen into the shop was quickly done, and while it was being made, Mrs. Dunwoody revolved Alec's plan for a branch shop in her mind. Her prestige would be considerably increased if she were the owner of two flourishing shops—and when she thought of this growth of reputation, she saw herself becoming the owner of many shops in each of which a member of her family would be manager. If she were to settle her children in comfortable circumstances, she need never fear to lose them from her side. Dunwoodys would be in every part of Belfast, all of them owing allegiance to her. Like Abraham, she might sit in the shade of the evening and consider her possessions and her children! In time, she would retire to a villa outside the city, and her children and their children would visit her. She imagined herself as an old woman in her garden in the summer nights, with her thriving descendants around her. Robert would often come to her, full of honour, and she would be proud of him. The others would be proud of him, too, and would feel no jealousy because she loved him more than she loved them. "My son, the minister," she would say, and people, knowing of his eminence, would pay respect to her! . . . .

The sudden bankruptcy of the shopkeeper in Cromac Street sharply brought her to a decision, and the

enlargement of the shop had hardly been completed when she agreed to instal Alec in the new one. His delight in it brought colour to his face. Mattie declared that he went to is as if he were going to the shore for a holiday and returned from it as healthy and happy as if he had enjoyed a month's sea-bathing.

"The walk over the two bridges does me a power of good," he said, but he knew that his happiness sprang from his possession of the shop. He worked hard so that his mother might not be fatigued by the changes in their life, and made Mattie and Margaret able to take complete charge of the old shop. "Just you take your rest," he said to his mother, "and leave us young ones to do the work. You've done your share! . . ."

She liked his solicitude for her, but did not submit to it. "No, no," she replied, "I've always had the direction of things, an' I'll keep it. I couldn't lie content if I didn't know where everything was."

"No doubt you're right, ma, but there's no needcessity for you to put yourself about. There's plenty of us to do the work. Robert's comin' up, too. Would you like to serve in the shop, Robert?"

"No, I would not," Robert replied.

Alec was affronted. "An' why not?" he demanded.

"I don't want to serve in it. That's why."

Mrs. Dunwoody smiled at her younger son. "It's a minister you want to be, son, isn't it?" she said.

"No, ma, I don't want to be that either."

She ceased to smile at him.

"Well, what do you want to be?" Alec shouted at him.

Robert paused for a moment, and then boldly said, "A sailor."

His mother flushed angrily. "Quit that talk," she said. "Quit that talk, do you hear me? Quit it, the pair of you. I've told you, Alec, more times nor I remember, that he's goin' to be a minister, so there's no needcessity for you or him to debate the matter atween you. An' you, Robert, be bid by me an' stop fillin' your head with romantical notions."

"I'd rather be a sailor nor anything," Robert insisted. "It's a quare fine life, a sailor's."

Her voice was raised as she replied, "What sort of a life, will you tell me? Home mebbe once in a blue moon, an' his childher hardly knowin' him. Mrs. McClurg in Spaniard Street has her children streamin' their eyes out every time her man comes home because they don't know who he is an' are 'feard of him. Two years an' more at a stretch he'll be away from her!"

"All the same, I want to go to sea," said Robert.

"You'll go to no sea. You'll stay here where your family is an' lead a dacent person's life. Sailor, indeed! The half of them drinkin' their way round the world, an' the other half drinkin' it back. The morra-morn I'll go an' see about gettin' you to a new school where they'll mebbe teach you sense an' not to talk so broad!"

He protruded his under lip. "I like talkin' broad. It's the way you talk. I like the way you talk."

She melted at once. "Yes, son, I know, but I want you to be better educated nor me."

He disregarded this. "I could get into the navy, ma," he said.

"The *what?*" The horror in her voice was indescribable.

"The navy. Me an' another lad got a paper at the post office about it. Here it is." He handed her the

pamphlet which glowingly described life in the navy. She took it from him, glancing at it for a moment, and then put it into the fire. "If I hear another word of this," she said, "big as you are I'll skelp the life out of you!"

He flushed at the threat of beating, for he was now old enough to feel that punishment of that sort was insulting. His cheeks darkened, and his eyes began to burn with anger.

"Yous can all talk," he said, "till yous are blue in the face, but I'm goin' to sea just as soon as ever I can get."

"Och, away an' divert yourself," said Mrs. Dunwoody.

Alec did not speak.

On the following day, she arranged for Robert to enter Martin's College. Later on, she said, he would go to the Presbyterian College to be trained for the ministry.

V

But her interest in Robert's future, as well as her interest in Alec's shop, was suddenly dispersed by her discovery that Mattie, without a word to her, had engaged herself to marry Andrew Shillington. Andrew came to her, proposing an immediate marriage with Mattie, and was pooh-poohed.

"The child's over young to be married," she said.

"Child!" Andrew exclaimed. "There's not much of the child about her. She's nineteen an' a bit more!"

"I'm busy," said Mrs. Dunwoody, cutting him short.

"But——"

"I'll think about it mebbe in two or three years' time."

"Two or three years' time! Sure, we might all be dead an' buried then," he remonstrated.

"Well, if we are, there'll be no call for marryin'."

Andrew stood before her, angry and bewildered, while she did this job and that about the shop, and waited for her to relent, but when he saw that she was ignoring him, his Ulster obstinacy made him resolve to have done with discussion and to announce a decision. "Look here, Mrs. Dunwoody," he said very firmly, "I spoke to you about Mattie because I wanted to do the civil an' nice thing by you, but if you're not willin' to be reasonable an' do the civil an' nice by me, I'll not discuss the matter with you at all."

"I'm not askin' you to discuss it," she answered. "I'm tellin' you what my mind is."

"Well, your mind's not my mind, nor Mattie's either for that matter. Her and me's goin' to be married on it, Mrs. Dunwoody, an' the sooner you reconcile yourself to that fact, the better it'll be for the whole of us."

She turned round on him. "You can quit out of my shop, Mr. Shillington," she said, "just as quick as ever you like."

The formal address of "Mr. Shillington" startled and dismayed him. She had known him all his life and had never hitherto called him anything but "Andy." The formality broke him.

"But, Mrs. Dunwoody, mem——"

"That'll do," she interrupted. "I've said my say. In two or three years' time, mebbe, but now, no. An' mebbe not then."

It was at that moment that Mattie, agitatedly listen-

ing, came crying to her mother that she would be married then or never.

"I'm goin' to have him, ma," she said, "whatever you say."

Mrs. Dunwoody stared at her as if she could not credit her ears.

"Are you demented, girl?" she demanded.

But Mattie remained firm. She seized Andrew's hand in hers, as if to reassure herself, and then boldly faced her mother. Her voice quavered as she spoke, but the quavering did not denote a failing purpose.

"I'll marry him now," she solemnly said, "as sure as there's a God above me. An' I dare you to stop me."

"That's the spirit," Andrew murmured, but Mrs. Dunwoody immediately silenced him. "Hold your tongue, you!" she said to him. "This is a matter for me an' my daughter."

"Ah, but it's me she's marryin'," he said in a lapsing voice as he stood aside.

Mrs. Dunwoody leant her elbows on the counter and adjusted her spectacles. She steadily gazed at Mattie for a few moments without speaking. Then she said, "You're determined to marry him, girl?"

"Yes, ma," Mattie answered without flinching.

"Whatever I say or do?"

"Whatever you say or do, ma—though I'd rather not offend you. But I'll have him now, ma," she hurriedly added, as if she were afraid she might be thought to be weakening.

"But what's the hurry?" Mrs. Dunwoody asked, after a pause.

"No hurry, except that we want to be married." It was Andrew who said this.

Mrs. Dunwoody was silent for a little while.

"Well?" said Andrew.

"Can you keep a wife?" she asked.

"Aye, I can, an' save a bit too," he confidently replied.

She turned away, and for a few moments pretended to arrange china ornaments on a shelf. She must think of something. . . . But Mattie was insistent. "Well, ma? Are you goin' to consent?" she demanded.

"Don't hurry me, girl," Mrs. Dunwoody said, without looking round. She took one of the ornaments in her hand—a piece called a "Sevastopol" and supposed to represent the gates of the besieged town—and turned it over and examined it. Why was she being so hard with the girl? Andrew was a decent enough lad. Was it because they had made a decision without her authority? Why could she not be kind to them, the young pair, so fond of each other? Any one with half an eye in his head could see how they loved each other. Why was she being so hard on them? . . . She scattered her thoughts, and put the ornament back in its place.

"I'll give my consent," she said, "if you'll both come and live here after you're married."

Andrew sulked. "We want a house of our own," he said. "Don't we, Mattie?"

"Yes, Andy," Mattie replied.

"An' forby," he continued, "it would look as if I couldn't earn enough to pay for a house, but had to get you to keep me!"

"That's my last offer," said Mrs. Dunwoody.

But if she was obstinate, so were they, and in the

end they were married without her consent or blessing. They had disregarded her wishes and had broken up her family, and she could not forgive them. She was not present at their wedding, nor would she permit Margaret to go to it. Alec was ordered to attend to his business in Cromac Street! . . . Very bare and friendless was the wedding, for Andrew and Mattie felt that they could not indulge in show when her mother ignored the marriage. Mattie made her poor finery as best she could, and on the morning of her marriage, dressed herself, though her eyes were aching with unshed tears, and when she was ready she descended from the attic which she shared with Margaret and entered the shop where her mother was standing behind the counter. She winced when she saw her, and for a moment or two it seemed that Mrs. Dunwoody would relent. But neither of them spoke. They stood there, gazing at each other, the young girl beautiful in her wedding-dress, and waited for a word to be uttered. But it was not uttered, and each of them hardened her heart. Margaret stood at the foot of the stairs, crying, and Mattie turned to comfort her. "It's all right, Maggie," she said. "I'm—I'm——"

She did not trust herself to finish the sentence, but turned again to her mother. Her lips trembled as she said, "I'm goin', ma!"

"So I see," said Mrs. Dunwoody.

But Mattie did not move. "Ma," she said, with infinite pleading in her voice.

Mrs. Dunwoody's hand trembled and she took hold of the counter to steady herself. All this, because the boy and girl wanted to marry each other and had not been tactful enough to do just what she wanted them

to do. How beautiful Mattie looked! The poor wee girl going out to get married and no woman to go with her. . . .

Then Mrs. Dunwoody heard herself saying, "You'll be keeping Mr. Shillington," and felt herself turning away from her daughter.

Mattie went out of the shop, with her head up, though a tear or two did fall. She heard Margaret trying to follow her, and the quick order of her mother, "Come here, girl!" and the sudden silence as her sister stopped, but she heard it very distantly. She must not cry. She must not meet Andrew with tears in her eyes! . . . And so, smiling, she went to Mr. Cregan's church and was married. But not quite without her family, for when the marriage was over and the register had been signed, and Andrew and she, now husband and wife, came down the empty-sounding aisle, suddenly from a pew she heard her name called. "Mattie! Mattie!" She looked round and saw Robert. She left her husband and ran to her brother and hugged him. "Oh, thank you, Darkie dear," she said, and now her pride all down, she cried without pretence.

"You're a brave dacent wee fellow," said Andrew Shillington.

Robert looked up at them. "I mitched," he said. "I mitched from school."

"You shouldn't 'a' done that," Mattie murmured, smiling at him as she wiped her eyes.

"I'll get the quare oul' skelpin' for it when I get home," Robert said, "but sure I don't care. Somebody had to be here."

He went home when Andrew and Mattie had gone off to Pickie for their day's honeymoon. Mrs. Dun-

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woody stared at him with strange, dry eyes as he entered the shop.

"Why aren't you at your school?" she said.

"I didn't go to school," he answered. "I mitched. I went to see Mattie married."

He waited for her anger to break on him, but her voice was unexpectedly gentle when she spoke.

"Come here, wee son," she said, and when he approached her, she put her arm around his neck and drew him very close to her.

"I'm glad some one was there," she said.

"Why didn't you go yourself then?" he asked.

She turned away. "I'd 'a' give the world to be there," she said

VI

Her desire that she might have been present at Mattie's marriage did not reconcile her to Mattie's disobedience. She made her will the more inflexible because her heart urged her to yield to the young—"if I'm soft with her I'll mebbe have to be soft with Robert!"—and so there was no communication between her and her daughter for several months after the marriage. She knew that Robert saw Mattie, nor did she try to prevent him from seeing her, but she sternly forbade Margaret and Alec to visit or mention her. Alec obeyed her, but she had trouble with Margaret who, in the end, reconciled her to Mattie. One night, six months after the marriage, Margaret slipped out of the shop when her mother was too busily engaged with customers to see what she was doing. She ran all the way to the short, ill-lit street of kitchen-houses to which Andrew Shillington had taken his bride. It

was a new street, mainly inhabited by young workingmen and their young wives, and in spite of its mean look it had an air of adventure and hope and romance. Not yet had its essential ugliness worn down the spirits of the young couples who lived in it. That would come later, too soon. In a little while the mean-minded rich who housed their labourers in this dingy and hideous street would have robbed these young of their romance and their happy aspirations, but that time was not yet. The little red houses were as new as the love that lived in them and seemed like it to be lovely. Each house had a patch of mouldy earth in front of the kitchen-window, about six feet in length and three feet in breadth. An iron railing, resting on a shallow foundation of red bricks, separated the garden from the cobbled pavement. Andrew had sown seed that was mostly infertile in his "garden," and here and there a patch of grass struggled out of the sour soil. Nasturtiums, unquenchably gay, climbed up a length of string to the window, and a clump of faded chrysanthemums, smutted over with soot, leant against the spout which dropped the rain from the roof to the ground. Margaret, remembering the brightness of her mother's shop and the comfort of the rooms, shivered as she turned into the dark little street. Her heart unaccountably failed her as she reached Mattie's house, and she hesitated before the door. Then she compromised with her obedience, and climbed on to the brick foundation between the garden and the foot-path, and, holding on to the iron railing, peered through the kitchen-window and saw her sister lifting a heavy kettle on to the hob. "She's made it look quare an' nice," she murmured to herself, and indeed the kitchen had a

warm, bright, snug look, despite its bareness. Andrew had not yet returned from his work, but presently would do so, and Mattie was laying the table for their evening meal. The kettle was nearly too heavy for her to lift, and when she had shifted it from the hob to the hot coals, she straightened herself with an air of weariness and turned away from the fire. She was crying. The young face was not now so pretty as it had been, but was drawn and tired and white. She stood irresolutely between the table and the fire, and then suddenly and heavily sat down and abandoned herself to her misery. Margaret trembled outside, unable to bear the sight of her sister in tears, and she dropped from the railing to the ground and stood in a bewildered state before the door. She felt that her mother ought to be comforting Mattie, but she longed to rush into the kitchen herself and throw her arms around her sister and weep with her. She moved towards the door, but stopped before she had reached it, and then, as suddenly as she had run out of the shop, she ran back to it. It seemed to be full of customers when she returned, and she caught a reproachful look from Mrs. Dunwoody, but Margaret paid no heed to the customers. She hurried behind the counter and panted her news into her mother's ears.

"Mattie's goin' to have a child," she said, "an' she's sittin' up there by her lone, cryin' her eyes out!"

A customer gaped at her as if she were mad, but Margaret did not care what the customer thought. She waited for her mother to speak. Mrs. Dunwoody stared at her for a few moments, and then took off her shop-apron and threw it aside.

"Get me my bonnet an' shawl," she said, and Mar-

garet flew upstairs to obey her. When she returned the customers were gone. "You served them brave an' quick, ma!" said Margaret, putting the shawl about her mother's shoulders.

"Aye," Mrs. Dunwoody answered. "Shut the shop, girl!"

"What about Alec and Darkie? . . ."

"Robert's away playin' himself. He can play a bit longer, an' Alec's able to look after himself. Shut the shop."

When the lamps were extinguished, and the shop-door was closed, they hurried off together to Mattie's house. They did not speak, except once when Mrs. Dunwoody said, "How do *you* know she's goin' to have a child?" and Margaret replied, "Och, I know rightly!" The street seemed darker to Margaret than it was a little earlier in the evening; the foggy, yellow light from the gas-lamps lit only small patches of it. She led her mother to Mattie's door and was about to enter, but Mrs. Dunwoody caught hold of her arm and restrained her. "Wait a bit," she said, and climbed on to the railings and peered in at the window as Margaret herself had done. Andrew was now at home, and he was kneeling on the floor beside Mattie, with his arms round her, trying to soothe her distress. But she could hardly be comforted, and the anxiety on his face showed that he was nearly as cheerless as Mattie. Mrs. Dunwoody looked at them, and then a cry forced itself from her lips, and she dropped from the railings and ran into the hall and flung open the door, leaving Margaret gaping after her. She rushed into the kitchen, crying "Come here to me, daughter!" and took Mattie in her arms and covered her face with kisses.

"They were both cryin' hard when I went in," said Margaret, when she told the story afterwards to Alec, "but God knows it was a different sort of a cryin' this time from the sort Mattie was at when I saw her the first time through the window."

THE THIRD CHAPTER

I

It seemed then to Mrs. Dunwoody that life was smoothly set for her. The shop and its branch steadily flourished. She had her wish that Mattie's son should be born in her house, for Andrew Shillington had submitted to her plea that a labourer's cottage was not a proper place for a Dunwoody child with De Lacy blood in its veins to be born in. The birth of the boy elated her, and she promised to furnish a better house for the young parents than the one in which they had started married life. Andrew and she, while searching for a house, talked about the baby and his mother, and imperceptibly Andrew received her affection. She liked his decision and his uprightness and his obstinacy when he had satisfied himself that a thing must be done. She had to give reasons to him, and although she preferred to give commands, she was content. "He'll tame Mattie anyway," she said to herself. They found a new home for Mattie in a parlour-house in a street near the shop, so near that Mrs. Dunwoody could walk to it in a few moments. This was now her chief pleasure, and gradually she relaxed her control over the shop, entrusting it more and more to Margaret while she indulged herself in her love for her grandchild. As she sauntered to Mattie's house, she allowed her fancy to run away with her. Mattie's marriage had jolted

her, and for a little while she was afraid, but all was well. Mattie had returned to her obedience, and was now a purring, contented mother, with no wild desire for flight or self-will. Andrew's mind was not unlike Mrs. Dunwoody's; their desires were akin. She was satisfied with Mattie's marriage, was even pleased with it. Andrew would certainly be a master one of these days. He was not one of the sort that remained a serving-man. There was much nonsense being talked around her by wild fellows, but she had lived a life and had observed men and women, and she knew that some were born to be masters and some were born to be servants. They could talk their heads off, but they could not talk that fact away. Andrew Shillington was serving now, but only until he had learnt his trade as a master, and when that time was over, he would take his proper place. She was well pleased with Andrew. Nor was her content only with Andrew and Mattie. Sam Peden showed signs of liking Margaret, and her secret hope had always been that Sam Peden would marry either Margaret or Mattie. Sam Peden was no fool; he had his father's ability and a bit more of his own. There was no knowing where Sam would land, once he started going. Not for the world would she show signs or countenance to Sam or Margaret of what she hoped and desired. The pair of them were well able to look after themselves! . . . It was Robert that bothered her mind. He remained her darling, despite the rivalry of his nephew. Would he continue to please her as he was presently doing? She was not sure of him, and of him, more than of her other children, she ardently desired to be sure. Each morning, she saw him depart for Martin's College with pride which she

could not express, and vaguely, reluctantly she realised that he was reaching out to manhood. In a year or two he would leave Martin's and go to the Presbyterian College, and then, if she were spared and God were willing, her wish would be fulfilled; she would "sit under" her son and be greeted by his congregation as "the minister's mother." When her mind turned back on her life, it found few dark patches and many that were bright. The hard times must have seemed harder while she was enduring them than they really were. Odd, now, that misfortune should make so poor a show in the memory, while good times glowed! Here, anyhow, was a settled, sober and satisfying life. If it continued, she could, when her time came to leave it, do so with content, knowing that God had dealt fairly by her! . . .

She did not lose her faith in the fair dealing of God when the sudden blow of Andrew Shillington's death fell upon her. He had come very close to her love, but there was comfort even in his loss, for Mattie and her son came home again. All her children were under her roof now, and one child more; the little Andrew. She had serenity, and serenity had sometimes seemed likely to be denied to her for ever. Alec and Margaret, with help from the widowed Mattie, persuaded her to relax her labours, and, not unwillingly, she would sometimes sit at the shop-door taking the sun and the air, while the baby Andrew slept by her side. Her memory began to be busy with her youth, and she felt odd longings to visit people whom she had known when she was young. She remembered her roots, and suddenly she announced to her family that she was in the mind to go to Donaghreagh for a rest. It was

years, she said, since she had been there, and a desire came over her to see it again. Robert had stayed in Donaghreagh fewer times than any of them, so she would take him with her. The rest could come down for the day on Sunday. They were mystified by her sudden decision, but it held no mystery for her. She felt her roots pulling at her heart; Donaghreagh was the soil in which she had grown. That was all.

II

The journey was like an exile's return to his native country. She recovered names and places that she had forgotten and took a queer delight in telling them over to Robert. When the train ran into Ballyards and she caught the first glimpse of Lough Cuan, recollection overflowed her mind and she brought Robert to her side at the window, while she recalled aloud what she remembered of the country through which they were travelling. "Lord Castlederry has his demesne round there," she said, pointing to the eastern side of the lough, "an' if you walk along the shore towards his place you'll see a big rock standin' on the edge of the water. They call it the Butter Lump in the books, but it was always called the Big Stone when I was a girl, though some people that was addicted to gamblin' used to call it the Giants' Jack! That's where I first saw your father, Robert. He was lyin' up against it, an' he passed a remark to me. I give him a very cool answer, for I was well brought up an' taught not to be too free with strangers. You see, I was only over there from Donaghreagh for the day. But he wasn't a bit put out by the short answer he got, an' he started to gag

me. I couldn't stand out against him, he had such a comic tongue in his head. 'You're quare an' stiff,' says he. 'Anybody'd think you were Lady Castlederry herself, you're that grand on it!' I was never one ready with my answer to people, but I was ready for him. 'Ah,' says I, 'an' how do you know I'm not Lady Castlederry?' He was as ready for me as I was for him. 'I know rightly," he said. 'I wouldn't have the nerve to address you if you were. She's a terrible proud woman, that!' 'An' amn't I proud, too?' says I. 'Oh, proud enough,' he answered me, comin' away from the Butter Lump that was rubbin' his coat smooth an' shiny, an' standin' fornenst me. 'I suppose,' says he, smilin' at me, 'if I was to walk as far as the town with you, you'd ate the head off me?' "

Robert interrupted his mother. "Do you mean to say he struck up to you, ma?"

"Aye, son," she shyly answered, "he struck up to me. I didn't dare to think what your gran'ma would 'a' said about it, but I never toul' her about it, so she suffered no hurt."

"Your father was a great lad for coddin' an' gaggin'," she continued. "You couldn't be in his company without wantin' to be coddin' an' gaggin' yourself. Have you never noticed, son, the way you catch pleasure from some people? It's as if they were smittle. Your father was like that. The place was brighter for him. I'm not a great woman for jokes an' talk, but even I got chatty an' comic when your father was in the house. I had my answer for him, too, when he asked me if I'd ate the head off him if he dandhered along by the side of me. I turned to him as sharp as you like, an' I said, 'I'm very partic'lar what I eat!' I wish you

could 'a' heard the roar he let out of him when I said that. He was as pleased as if he'd said it himself an' indeed it wasn't bad, considerin' it was me that made it. He fell into step with me, an' we walked back the len'th of the road thegether, him sayin' every now an' awhile, 'You're the great girl for givin' back answers. I suppose you'd ate the head off me, says I. No, says she, I'm very partic'lar what I eat. Och, sang, but you're the great girl for givin' back answers!' That was the sort of conversation we had, son, him an' me, an' he left me feelin' that well pleased with me, that I was pleased with him, too. 'So long,' says he, when we separated, 'I'll mebbe see you again?' 'An' mebbe you'll not,' says I, 'for I'm seldom in Ballyards. Donaghreagh's where I live.' 'Is it?' says he. 'Whereabouts?' I just tossed my head at him, an' I said, 'It might be in the Manor House an' it might be in the Poor House.' I was just in the mood for coddin' him like that, son. 'Well, where do you live?' says he. 'You'd better come an' fin' out,' was all the answer he got out of me. 'By my sang,' says he, 'I will. I'll be there Saturday's a week, an' mebbe you'll keep an eye open for me.' 'Oh, I don't know so much about that,' says I. 'You'll have to do all the lookin' yourself. I'm not goin' to demean myself lookin' out for any fella.' He took it well. 'I'll be there Saturday's a week,' says he, an' he was. I was married on him six months later. He was a darin' fella was your father, an' my heart's joy."

She pointed to Knock Scraboh. "Do you see thon hill?" she said. "Him an' me walked up it the day we were married. It was all the honeymoon we had, but I enjoyed it better nor any high-up woman ever

enjoyed her trips abroad. It's a long time now, Robert, since I lost your father, but I can see him as plain as I can see you, an' I never rued a minute I was with him. I wish he was here now, goin' back to Donaghreagh with me, the way he used to when he come back from a voyage an' I'd go to Belfast to meet him."

She became silent, and remained silent until the train drew up in Donaghreagh station, and during that silence Robert's mind revolved around the father whom he had never seen. He was a sea-faring man! . . . But he did not speak to his mother of what was in his thoughts. Rain was falling when they alighted from the train into a station which looked like part of a private house. The engine seemed to be standing in a back-room.

"This is a queer sort of a station!" Robert exclaimed, glancing round the bare buildings. "The County down must 'a' been very hard up when they stuck this up."

She thought he was slighting her birth-place. "It's a very nice wee station," she said sharply, "far better nor any of your slap-up, grand places. It makes you feel homely, anyway, an' no other station ever I was in makes you feel that way. We'll walk up now to our lodgin's an settle ourselves, an' then mebbe we'll take a bit of a walk roun' the town——"

"Town!" Robert laughed. "I like the town. Sure, it's only a cod of a place. You could put it in a corner of Belfast an' never know it was there."

"You've a strange notion of a joke, Robert. It doesn't become you to talk that way of the place where your people come from. An' let me tell you this place was notorious long before ever Belfast was known or heard of. You're greatly set up on your Belfast, but

the world knows well that it's a mushroom sort of a town by the side of Donaghreagh. Just consider that, my son."

He teased her. "You're lossin' your temper," he said.

"No, I'm not——!"

"Och, yes, you are, ma. Your hand's tremblin' with the rage you're in."

"I'm not, I tell you, but I take pride in my place an' I like them that belong to me to take pride in it, too. This is a great wee town, though mebbe you can't recognise its greatness. Look there," she said, as they paused at the station-door while she pointed to the harbour and the Three Islands lying a mile out in Knock Fergus Bay. "Isn't that a lovely sight?"

"Och, I don't know——!"

"You know rightly, but you'll not admit it. You're in one of your provokin' moods an' you'll go against everybody an' everything."

He saw that she was hurt and angry, and he sobered himself. "I'm not tryin' to provoke you at all, ma," he said. "I just don't think much of it. I never did think much of it. I'd rather have Pickie any day."

"Pickie!" she said in a contemptuous tone.

"Well, there's a bit of life there any way. They're all dead in this place, an' there's nobody to bury them."

Anxiety filled her. "Do you really not like it, Robert?" she said.

"It's all right in its way, but anybody'd think it was heaven, from your talk. I'm not taken with it, but of course I'm only at the station yet, an' the rain's pourin' down. I dare say when I get used to it, I'll think more of it. It's not too bad."

She made no answer to this, but started off towards the lodgings she had rented. She had hoped that Robert would feel affection for Donaghreagh as deep as her own, but his mockery of it, although she felt that most of it was meant to tease her, made her realise that he looked at it more critically than she did. She blamed herself for not having brought him more frequently to the village in his childhood. She remembered now with regret that when Robert had proposed to her once that she should take them to "the shore" for a month, she had scornfully refused to follow the example of her neighbours who could not content themselves in their own homes. If Robert had scrambled about the rocks of Donaghreagh in his childhood, he would now have affectionate recollections of it and would not be tormenting her with his belittlement. But he had no young memories to lean on.

Their lodging was on the Shore Road, midway in the bend of the bay, and standing at the door they could see the lighthouse at the end of the pier, and immediately in front of them, the largest of the Three Islands. The drift of rain hid the coast of Scotland from them, but they saw ships on the Irish Sea, and, far out on the horizon, the smoke of an Atlantic liner.

"That's fine enough for you, isn't it?" she said, when they had bestowed their trunks in the bedrooms and were gazing out of the window. "Where in the earthly world could you get better views nor here? Isn't it just like the kingdoms of the world spread out fornenst your eyes? The Moat's a wee pace from the door. Will you come an' see it?"

"Och, I've seen it once, ma. An' the street's wet."

"The rain's stopped. Come just to oblige me an'

see it again. The tea's not ready yet, an' we'll have time an' plenty to walk to the Moat an' back."

They walked along the road to the narrow lane which led to a large, steep dun with a square, castellated building on its summit, which was called "The Moat." She did not speak as they climbed the narrow, slippery path, but waited for some words of admiration from him. He stood erect, when they were on top of the dun, and gazed at the ramshackle building on it.

"They ought to pull this place down," he said.

She could not bear it. She sat down on a wooden seat, and he was shocked at the anger he saw in her eyes.

"What ails you?" he asked.

"Ails me! You an' your talk!——"

"But——"

"Wheesht, wheesht with you, an' think shame of yourself. It's all that's left of the oul' ancient days and you want to pull it down. For shame, Robert Dunwoody, for shame."

He thrust out his under lip. "Well, sure, it's ugly," he began, but she stopped him.

"It's oul'," she said. "No one knows how oul' it is."

"What differs does that make? It's oul' an' ugly, an' I see no sense in keepin' an ugly thing just acause it's oul'."

"Generations of people have sat here the way we're sittin', an' looked over the sea as we're lookin' now. Is that nothin' to you, Robert, nothin' at all? Your people climbed this bit of a hill many's a time! . . . Look, look at the way people's cut their names all over the place. You'll find our name plenty of places here.

Why, I came here as a wee slip of a girl an' rowled down the hill into the *shough,* an' I thought it was the most wonderful place on God's earth. An' you want to pull it down."

"Sure, it's tumblin' to pieces," he said in a resentful tone, for her distress made him uneasy. "An' what's the good of it anyway?"

"The good of it!" she exclaimed. "This good! To mind people of them that went before them, an' to make them feel a pride in their family an' their generation. That's the good of it, an' he's a poor sort of a fellow that has to be told it."

"Well, I don't see much sense in it," he retorted.

They descended from the Moat and returned to their lodgings. "It's all lovely," she said, "every inch of it."

The tide was out, and yellow weed lay in lank heaps about the strand.

"The foreshore looks terrible dirty," said Robert.

She started away from him. "I'm sorry I brought you," she said.

III

Her spirits recovered when she found that although he disliked the village or, as she preferred to call it, the town, he delighted in the country round it, and she encouraged him to take the long, lonely walks he liked about the Peninsula. He would follow the roads past fine farms until at last he landed on the shores of Lough Cuan where he would lie down and sun himself in full view of Knock Scraboh or see the Mourne Mountains darkly rising through clouds to the sky. To come on Lough Cuan when the tide was out was his chief

pleasure. Suddenly the Lough would empty itself into the Irish Sea, leaving a wide stretch of green and red mud, fringed by black rock and masses of yellow sea-weed. Birds picked their way through the weed and the rock-pools, bewildering him with their variety and teasing him because he could not name them. He climbed to the top of the Butter Lump, where his mother had first met his father, and sat there in an ecstacy because there was so much loveliness in the world. Sometimes, when the air was wet with rain, and the trees and grass became acutely green, he felt that he could not bear to go away, that he must remain in this place until he died. A love of earth, of familiar soil, began to grow in his heart, and he would stretch himself on the Butter Lump and gaze at Knock Scraboh and the vari-coloured bed of Lough Cuan and the high, piercing black peaks of Mourne as if they were living creatures that he might fondle. He felt an anger, which he could not explain, when he saw that some religious fanatic had painted "Prepare to meet Thy God," in large white letters on one side of the Butter Lump, and "Eternity" on the other. Why could they not leave the Butter Lump alone? Reluctantly, in the evening, he would return to Donaghreagh, suddenly saddened at the sight of so much beauty disappearing in the darkness. Mrs. Dunwoody was persuaded to ride on a long car with him down the length of the Peninsula, through Ballywater and Cloey to Ballyquinlan Point and Ferryport and up the Lough Cuan side through Greycubbin and Kirk Abbey and Ballyards to Donaghreagh again. Wherever they went, they found great masses of yellow sea-weed, trailing across the rocks.

"Quare stuff," said Robert, gazing at it in a puzzled manner. "I can't bear it, an' yet I love to look at it. It's sad-lookin'."

"You're not afeard of sorrow, son?" Mrs. Dunwoody murmured.

"Afeard of sorrow!" he replied. "I don't understand you, ma!"

She paused a moment. "No, son, of course not. But don't be afeard of it when it does come." Her tone changed, becoming brighter. "You like the country now, don't you?" she said, and she meant by "the country" this one part of the earth that was hers.

"I like it well enough," he answered.

"Do you not love it?"

He considered. "Aye, I do," he said.

"Aren't you glad your family come from a place as nice as this—all this nice land an' the fine-lookin' farms an' the dacent people? Look roun' you, son. It's a lovely wee place, isn't it?"

"It is," he said.

"Where in the earthly world would you see any place as nice as this? All them wee hills, now, would they be any better anywhere else? You wouldn't want to go away from this, son, would you? You'd be content to stay here all your life, with your friends an' your relations?"

"I don't know so much about that, ma."

She did not continue the conversation in those terms, but contented herself with repeating his praises of the Peninsula. Very slyly, as she thought, she belittled foreign countries by exalting her own. In the evening, when they had eaten their tea, she took him up the road to Killisland, and when they had reached the Presby-

terian church, she stopped him outside the railings and bade him look inside.

"I'd give the world," she said, "to see you in the pulpit of that place. The Reverend Robert Dunwoody!"

He faced her then. "I don't want to be a minister," he said.

"But, son, I intend you for one——"

"I tell you, ma, I'd hate it. I'm not the minister sort!——"

Her voice hardened as she interrupted him. "An' what sort are you? What *do* you propose to do with yourself?"

"I said before," he answered, "I want to go to sea like my father. I'm just longin' to be on a boat——"

"Come home," she said bitterly.

She hurried away from the church, back to their lodgings, nor did she seem to know that he was not following her. For a few moments, he stood in front of the church-railings, gazing after her as she walked down the sloping street, half eager to run after her and make her happy by agreeing to her wish, half resentful against her because she tried to subdue him to her ambition. While he deliberated, she turned a corner and was out of sight. He rebuked himself for his obstinacy. Suddenly she had seemed an old, old woman to him as she picked her way down the rough, descending footpath. There was a frail look about her that made him feel tender to her. His mind filled with her story, how she had striven with hardship that her children might be made safe from it. Alec, sometimes in the attic, would repeat it to him and say, "She has the heart of a hundred men, that woman!" And so, indeed, she

had. His love for her swiftly surged up like the inrushing tide of Lough Cuan, as he stood there remembering her slight, determined figure, bending now with her age and her disappointments, and he wanted to cry. Very deeply he loved his mother, yet no one roused in him so much opposition as she did. Why could he not obey her, or at least pretend that he would some day fulfil her ambition, when he loved her more than he was able to say? He turned towards the church, and leant against the railings, so that his tears might not be observed by passers-by, and presently he heard himself talking as if she were standing by his side. "You know, I love you," he was saying, "but you keep on makin' me resist you as if I didn't love you at all. Anybody, to hear me refusin' you when you want me to be a minister, 'ud near think I hated you, but you *know* I love you, an' what do you keep on makin' me look as if I didn't for?" Then he talked to himself, as if he realised that she had left him. "Why don't you follow her home an' tell her you'll do any dam' thing she wants, even if you hate doin' it, just because you can't bear her to be unhappy——"

He wiped his eyes, and turned away from the church, and stood on the kerb for a few moments, undetermined what to do. Then he walked along the road to Killisland, away from Donaghreagh.

IV

An old church, very small, was perched on the edge of the sea, and Robert climbed over the wall and walked through the graveyard in which mouldering headstones recorded the names of the long-ago dead.

While he stood before one of the graves, endeavouring to decipher the worn names on the stone, he heard voices, and presently round the corner of the tiny church, coming from the sea, Brenda Cairnduff and a girl, strange to Robert, appeared. Brenda came quickly to him. "Is that you, Darkie?" she said, holding out her hand. "I didn't expect to see you here."

She introduced him to her companion, a cousin, and he explained his appearance in Killisland.

"I'm just down for the day," she said. "I'm going back to Belfast to-night. I'm really on my way to the station now. My cousin here is leaving me part of the way to Donaghreagh, but if you're going back now, you could save her the trouble."

"Well, I wasn't goin' just yet——"

"Of course," she interrupted, "I don't want to take you out of your way, but I just thought I'd like to step in and say good-evening to your mother. But if you don't want to keep me company——"

She did not finish the sentence, contenting herself with a sly smile. Her cousin settled the matter in a quick, decisive way. "Well, as you won't want me any more," she said, "I think I'll just turn back now. I've a lot to do before bedtime. Good-night, Brenda!" She kissed Brenda and shook hands with Robert. "Any time you're passin' this way," she said to him, "call in, an' we'll be glad to give you a drop of tea."

"You're very kind——"

"Good-night, then!" and she turned and went quickly back to the village.

Brenda regarded her cousin in silence until she was out of hearing. Then she said to Robert, "Mamie's a nice girl, but she's very country. She has an awful

broad way of talking, and she's terribly off-hand in her manners."

"Sure, there's no harm in that, Brenda."

"You're not so particular as I am, Darkie, I know. You might be a lot more particular with advantage. But then things are very different for a man. He can afford not to be so particular as a woman. A woman has to be more particular——"

He interrupted her. "Here's a cart comin'," he said. "You can get a lift back to Donaghreagh."

"Darkie," she said, indignantly, as they looked towards the approaching farm-cart, "you know I'd never go in a thing like that. What would anybody think if they saw me in a cart? It wouldn't be the thing at all. No, we'll walk and we'd better start at once. If anything comes along—nice, I mean—we'll mebbe get a lift on it, but I'm quite content to walk."

"Have it your own way," he replied, as they left the churchyard and turned towards Donaghreagh. "Though what's wrong with the cart I can't see."

"No, of course not." She smiled at him indulgently. "You were always a wee bit rough and ready, Darkie. You really ought to start thinking about things in a more refined way. You'll soon be a grown man." He grunted, but did not speak. She heaved a sigh of satisfaction. "It's awfully nice to see you again, Darkie," she said. "I haven't had a walk with you for a long while."

"I dare say you had better company. Alec's always ready to take you anywhere you want to go."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Alec!" she said, with a little contempt in her tone which he resented.

"What's the matter with Alec?" he demanded.

"He's a good fella—looks after himself—an' any girl ought to be glad of the chance of goin' with him?"

"Of course, I'm not making little of Alec—not in the very least—but I'm not very much in the notion of him."

"You could do worse—a lot worse. Come on, step it out or you'll miss your train."

She made a face in her impatience and irritation. "Really, Darkie," she said, "you're a most provoking person. I haven't seen you for I don't know how long and already you want to get rid of me. I've plenty of time for my train, and even if I miss it, what matter. I could stay the night in Donaghreagh. My mother will think I'm staying with Mamie. Mebbe, Mrs. Dunwoody could get me a room in your lodgings——"

"There isn't a room in the house!"

She blushed with vexation. "Anybody'd near think you didn't want me," she said.

"Now, don't be foolish, Brenda," he replied. "It doesn't matter one way or the other to me."

"Sometimes, I think you don't like me," she murmured.

"Och, I like you well enough. What's the matter with you?"

She did not answer, and they walked along in silence. The evening was closing in, and the boats which drifted on the sea began to put out their lamps. The sea was silent. Quietness came over the fields, as the birds and cattle settled down for the night. Brenda lifted her head and gazed about her, as if she were looking for some one, and then she slipped her arm in his. "I wish you would like me more," she said.

"What for?"

"You know rightly. You're just saying that to torment me. Wait a minute. Sit here a wee while!" She sat down on the low stone wall, as she spoke.

"You'll miss your train," he answered.

"Sit down beside me when I ask you. I'm tired."

He sat beside her. "You should 'a' took the lift when you could 'a' got it," he said.

"Darkie!"

"Yes."

"You're a queer fellow!"

"What's queer about me?" he demanded.

"Well, the way you go on. Amn't I nice?"

He regarded her with astonishment. "You're very nice," he replied.

"Well, why don't you? . . . Och, Darkie, are you provoking me or are you just thick?"

He got up and stood beside her. "I think you must be a bit upset or something. Come on!" But she did not rise.

"I want to tell you something," she said.

"Go on, then."

"But come nearer. I don't want the whole world to hear me."

"Sure, there's not a person within a couple of miles of you——"

She seized hold of his coat and drew nim to her. "Bend down," she said, and when he had done so, she kissed him.

"There," she said. "That's what I've been wanting to do all the time, and I ought not to have had to do it. You should have kissed me. I love you, Darkie."

He compelled her to get up from the wall, and without speaking they continued on their way. She put her

arm in his, and he did not resist her. Silently they came to Donaghreagh.

"You've just time to get your train," he said. "You'd better not come to see my ma."

"Very well," she answered.

He took her to the station and put her in the train.

"Good-night, Brenda," he said.

"Do you not love me?" she asked.

"I don't love anybody," he replied, "except my ma."

"I don't mean that sort of love. Do you not love me the way a fellow loves his girl?"

"No, Brenda, I don't."

She sat back in her seat.

"Good-night," he said.

But she did not reply.

V

Mrs. Dunwoody and Robert returned to Belfast at the end of their holiday in some anger with each other. Their discussions, however they might start, ended with his obstinate assertion that he was determined to be a sailor.

"It's no use talking," she said, "I've planned your career!"

"Amn't I to have any say in it, then?"

"At your age. What do you know what you want? . . ."

The life in the shop was resumed where it had been left off. Alec came and went about the two shops, helped by Margaret, who was now allowed to "go up the road" with Sam Peden, but was forbidden to con-

sider herself seriously engaged to him for a year or two. Robert returned to Martin's College. Soon he would be leaving it, his mother said, to go to the Presbyterian College. There was nonsense in his mind about a seafaring life, but that was only a lad's nonsense. Presently, as his education improved and his judgment sobered, he would put such follies away and would be guided by her. The Dunwoody family would live in unity in the one place, admired and respected! . . . With this dream in her mind, she told Alec to take Robert to the exhibition which was opened in Belfast soon after her return from the expedition to Donaghreagh. They were to pay particular attention to the useful exhibits, and Alec obeyed her introduction with an exactitude which bored his brother. Robert wanted to see the lady whose head was cut off and exposed on a plate and then restored to her body, but Alec insisted that he should look at machinery for crushing cake for cattle, and urged him to marvel at the extent and variety of the exports and imports of Ireland. "Sure, it's only a fraud!" he said, when Robert repeated his desire to see the decapitated lady. "Fancy the idea of paying sixpence to be humbugged, and you able to see all these great machines for nothing!" Robert hated machinery. He had never had the boy's love of it, and he could not be persuaded to go down to the engine-room of the paddle-steamer which ran from Belfast to Pickie because the smell of the hot oil and the noise of the plunging propellers were insufferable to him. He loved the deck and the sound of the scud and the smell of the sea, and he would stand as long as he could in the bows of the *Slieve Bearnagh* trying to catch white drops of foam as they flew past him on the wind,

or watching the water being cut into great curves of green crystal as the boat drove through it. He could not excite himself about boilers and screws and binders and steam-ploughs, and Alec's suggestion that it would be very useful for him, when he was a minister, to be able to discourse with merchants in an intelligent, as well as a Christian, manner left him unimpressed. "The trouble with half the ministers," Alec said to Robert's unheeding ears, "is that they have no gumption about ordinary affairs. They blether away as if we were all livin' like Jews in Palestine and doin' our ploughin' with the help of cattle. There's not a one of them seems ever to have seen or heard of a steam-plough. Now, you pay attention to that, Robert, and you'll get the advantage of it. People in a big way of business'll heed you then, for they'll know you have a bit of wit and knowledge in your head. Do you see this thing here? One girl, standing at it, can do more work with it in a day nor a hundred men could do in a week with the oul' hand-looms——"

"I don't care a damn whether she can or not," said Robert.

This was the first time that he had ever said a bad word, and the sound of it, as it left his lips, startled him. It came out so easily, too, that he might have been in the habit of swearing. He glanced at his brother, and saw that Alec was shocked.

"That's no language for a man that's dedicated to the ministry," Alec said.

Robert became stubborn. "Isn't it?" he said. "Well, it's the sort of language they'll get from me if they make a minister of me. A while ago you were grumblin' because half the ministers had no gumption, and

now you're grumblin' at me because I have. There's no contentin' you!"

"Cursin' and swearin' isn't gumption——"

"I dare say not, but all the people that has any gumption curses and swears. And damn's not much of a curse anyway. I've heard people, respected people, too, say a lot worse."

"There's no need for you to imitatin' the bad side of them. I'm not ignorant of the fact that people says things they'd do better not to say, but that's no reason why I should say them, an' it's no reason why you should. It would be a nice thing for a minister to go about the place damnin' and blastin' and then get up in the pulpit of a Sunday mornin' an' tell the people to have clean tongues!"

"Och, Alec, what harm's in a wee damn?"

"It's the beginnin' of a lot that's worse. Many's a man starts off with no more nor a damn an' ends up with D.T.'s an' the gallows. I tell you, boy, it's the start that matters. The rest is easy and natural. Now, take an interest in these machines and try to keep your mind off things that'll divert your thoughts."

Robert regarded his brother with curiosity. "Alec," he said, "did you never do nothin' wrong in your life?"

"I dare say I have. Many's a thing. But I do my best, and the best can do no more. Not that that'll bring you much reward. It's never the good and industrious man that's the favorite."

"What makes you think that?" Robert said.

"I've cause to think it," Alec answered mysteriously, and would not be any more explicit when Robert pressed him to explain himself.

The visit ended abruptly. Alec would not stay until

the hour of closing because he wished to go home and go to bed. "I have to get up in the mornin'," he said, "and attend to my work. I can't spend half the night here, galumphin' about!"

"I can't think what you come for if you want to run away the minute you arrive," Robert protested.

"I come because my ma told me to bring you. That's why I come. If you have any more remarks to make, make them when I'm not here."

VI

Margaret went with him on his next visit to the exhibition, which had now been open long enough for the novelty to have worn away. The authorities, hoping to revive interest in it, had engaged sensational "turns" which could be witnessed by all the visitors, not in the side-shows at an extra charge, but in the central hall as part of the cost of admission. On the night when Margaret and Robert went to the exhibition, the star performer was Blondin, the Frenchman who had crossed the Falls of Niagara on a tight-rope. Terrible tales were told of the risks which the Frenchman took. Other tight-rope walkers gave their performances with wide nets stretched beneath the rope to catch them if they should fall, but Blondin, although he was an old, gray-haired man, disdained to use a net. If he were to fall! . . . Margaret hardly dared to let her mind dwell on the horrid thought, and for a while refused to believe that Blondin, marvellous man though he was, would walk along a swaying rope high up in the air unless he had some protection from the floor beneath him, so Robert took her to the central hall

immediately they had paid for admission, to convince her that there was no net. Up in the roof, at a dizzy height, they could see a rope stretched between two long poles, each of which was surmounted by a tiny platform. The distance from the rope to the ground seemed immense, and indeed it was considerable, and while they contemplated it, they felt that nothing else in the exhibition mattered but Blondin's performance. Robert led Margaret to the platform at the end of the hall where there were tiers of seats.

"It'll not begin for a long while yet," Margaret said, but Robert did not reply. He sat down and motioned to her to sit beside him.

"Don't you want to see the rest of the show?" she asked.

"Not now," he replied. "We can see it after."

"But supposin' he falls down and kills himself—we'll be in no mood then for walkin' round lookin' at things," said Margaret.

"You can go if you like," he answered, "but I'll wait here till he comes. I'll keep a seat for you."

She went off, but did not stay away long, for she found the exhibition tedious without the company of some one to whom she could make remarks on it, and so they sat together until the advertised hour when Blondin was to ascend to the rope. The central hall gradually filled, except in the middle, under the rope, where a clear space was kept, "so that there should be nothin' to stop him from hittin' the ground if he falls," as Margaret said. She glanced up into the roof where the rope and the little platform could vaguely be seen in the dusk, and shuddered at the thought of the calam-

ity which might occur. She felt herself turning dizzy with apprehension, and once she shivered violently. "Are you cold?" said Robert. She was ashamed to acknowledge that she was trembling with fear and she stoutly said "No" and held on to the seat to prevent herself from shuddering again.

"You're terrible calm," she said, just before the time when Blondin was to appear.

"Calm about what?" he asked.

"Him fallin' off that rope and smashin' himself to bits!"

"Och, that's girl's talk!" he scornfully exclaimed.

The lights were increased, and it seemed to Margaret, sitting on the platform and gazing down on the throng in the hall, that the place was full of animated footballs with staring eyes! She could see crowds of round, nodding heads which she wanted to kick! . . . Blondin came down the steps at the side of the platform from the room in which he dressesd for his performance. He passed close to Margaret and Robert, and they held their breath as he did so. He was now an old man with whitening hair and a full, fresh-coloured face. He walked heavily, but his strong eyes had a sleepy sort of strength in them such as is seen in the eyes of a wild animal. He wore a dark pink or pale red suit of "skinfits" or tights, from which a golden fringe dangled, and Robert thought he looked well in them, but Margaret said it was ridiculous for a man of his age to get himself up in that ludicrous fashion.

"How would you have him dressed—in a Sunday coat and trousers? Is that the way you'd have him walk the tight-rope?" Robert demanded.

"I don't want him to do it at all. Poor old soul,

it's fearful him having to earn his livin' that way at his age!——"

Bursts of applause greeted the old Frenchman as he came down to the platform, and he stood for a moment or two bowing to the audience, once to the right, twice to the centre, and once to the left. He bowed as if he were bored by the ceremony. One imagined him saying to himself, "I've come here to risk what's left of my life for your amusement and to provide myself with money. Let me get on with the job. Don't waste my time with your silly applause!"

He walked to the nearer of the two upright poles, and after a brief delay, was hauled to the roof in some kind of rope-cradle. They could see him standing on the platform in the roof, wiping his hands on a handkerchief and rubbing his shoes in powdered resin. The crowd became very silent, a great mass of upturned white faces. Then Blondin, taking the balancing-pole in his hands, stepped lightly on to the rope and strode across and back. The strain was over. Margaret no longer felt any desire to cry. The old Frenchman knew his job and was doing it superbly. Backwards and forwards he went across the rope in a glide that was very graceful. The swift, perfectly-poised figure, dexterously moving along the rope, seemed to be a different being from the old, gray-haired man who had walked so heavily across the platform, and Margaret could not easily reconcile the lithe rope-walker with the bulky old man who had brushed past her a few moments earlier. But Robert was entranced by him, and had no mind for speculations on his age or agility. He saw only the romantic figure, assuredly stepping on air. . . .

They watched him at his various tricks. He lay down full length on the rope. He crossed it, with his legs enveloped in a sack. He ran from one side to the other. He walked without the balancing-pole, keeping himself poised by his outstretched arms. He pushed a wheelbarrow in front of him. He pretended to fall. . . . Margaret sobbed at that moment, and Robert's heart leaped into his mouth, but he recovered himself quickly. "That's only a cod," he said to her. "He does that on purpose to scare you. Sure, that man would never fall!"

An official came to the front of the platform where Margaret and Robert were sitting and informed the audience that Blondin would now carry a man on his shoulders across the rope. Would any person present volunteer for this great honour? Silence was followed by nervous laughter and a pretence of offers from young men who were held back, without much difficulty, from the platform by their alarmed girls. A notoriously timid man was vainly urged by his friends to let Blondin carry him, and the look of dismay on his face denoted that he was afraid lest he might be taken against his will. Blondin, like a big, benignant bird, was resting with his balancing-pole lying before him on the arms of the tiny platform. The official still harangued the crowd. Was there not one man among them who would like to be able to tell his children and his children's children of the deed of daring he had done when he allowed Blondin, the greatest tight-rope walker in the world, to carry him across the rope? "With no net to catch you either!" Women drew in their breath when he said that. The words had a chastening effect on the audience, and the hilari-

ous ceased to make any pretence to a daring they did not feel. The notoriously timid man was allowed to have reason on his side.

"Won't any one volunteer?" said the official in the accents of finality.

There was a short silence, and then Robert stood up. "Yes," he said. "I will."

VIII

The sensation was terrific. The official was the most astounded man in the hall, and he turned to Robert with a look on his face which indicated that he was about to dissuade him from his offer. "Do you mean it?" he said.

"I do indeed," Robert replied.

Margaret plucked at his arm. "For dear sake, Darkie," she began, but he pulled his arm away from her, and she turned to a woman beside her for support. "Persuade him," she said.

"Son, dear," said the woman, "are you away in the head or what? Sit down and content yourself. If the oul' fella up on the rope likes to chance his neck, let him. Sure, he's paid to do it. But you'll get nothin', except mebbe your skull cracked!"

"Och, it's all right," said Robert.

"Och, no, it's not——"

The official interposed between them. "You understand," he said, "that there's a great risk. Blondin's all right, but are you?"

"If he's all right," said Robert, "I am."

"It's easy to talk that way," the woman interrupted, "and you standin' on the ground, but how'll you talk

when you're sittin' on his back and nothin' between you an' the floor but air!"

"I don't know what to do," began the bewildered official.

"Och, you know rightly what to do," said Margaret suddenly in possession of herself. "Forbid him to go up."

Robert rounded on her. "The man challenged anybody to let himself be carried over the rope, an' I made a fair offer——"

"Wasn't he only coddin'! Sure, they always say things like that, an' them knowin' well nobody'll heed them."

"As a matter of fact," the official explained, "that's true. We have a proper person who volunteers——"

"Then the whole thing's a fraud!" Robert indignantly demanded.

"Not at all. A man will be carried by Blondin, but if we were to let anybody go up—well, supposin' you lose your nerve half way across——"

"I won't," said Robert.

"You might. You'd be killed and so would Blondin!"

"I'll take my chance of that!"

Margaret plucked his arm again. "Darkie," she pleaded.

"Och, quit, Margaret," he said. "It's you that's put them all up to not lettin' me." He turned to the official. "I repeat my offer," he said. "I'm ready to go up, an' if you don't let me, you're a fraud."

There was some applause as he said this, but the majority of the audience were against him. One man tried to reassure his frightened wife by declaring that

the whole thing was a put-up job. Robert overheard him, and indignantly answered him. "It's no put-up job," he exclaimed. "I've never clapped eyes on Blondin in my life before——"

"Well, the more damned fool you, then," said the man.

"Come on away, John!" said his wife, "for fear anything happens!"

But he would not listen to her. "I will not," he said. "I've paid my money, an' I'll see whatever there is to see!"

The official made his decision. He thought that that vast assemblage of enlightened people would support him in refusing to allow this young gentleman to endanger two lives! . . . The applause with which his statement was greeted convinced him that he had not judged the temper of the audience incorrectly. He would like to say that no one appreciated the courage and spirit of the young gentleman more than he did. A chorus of "Hear, hears!" and a single, "He's a bloody wee fool, an' ought to be well skelped!" interrupted this testimony to Robert. But, he continued, he could not be a party to endangering two lives, and therefore, he reluctantly refused to allow the young gentleman to carry out his intention. Nevertheless, Blondin would carry a man across the rope, and he was happy to say that there was some one present. . . .

Then a man employed by Blondin came forward, smiling and smirking, and proceeded to get ready for the adventure. He removed his boots, and was hauled to the platform by the rope which had previously hauled Blondin there. There had been a deep silence when Blondin first strode on to the rope, but now the

silence was intense, despite the fact that every one knew that the man to be carried across was a paid employee of Blondin and accustomed to this performance. There was a pause, while Blondin and the man talked together. "He's tellin' him about you," said Margaret to her brother. Then, in silence, Blondin moved along the rope, with the man on his back and the balancing-pole in his hand. He moved slowly, feeling his way with great care, until he got to the middle of the rope, where he slowly knelt down and then slowly rose up again. He moved back a little then, and then went forward, and then . . . he slipped. Margaret's hands automatically rose to her face, and a long, indrawn "Oh!" broke from the audience, as if every man and woman in the crowd had become one person uttering a single cry. But Blondin recovered himself, and almost gaily ran across the rest of the rope where he dropped the man on the platform and left him. He turned then and strode back along the rope, and in a moment or two was down on the ground, while the great crowd cheered him. He climbed on to the platform where Robert and Margaret were sitting, and again he was the old, heavy man, with sweat pouring down his face. Excited men and women shook his hand, but he was indifferent to their applause. Robert stood up as he approached, and could almost smell the damp heat of his body.

"That's the wee fella that wanted you to carry him," said the woman who had supported Margaret.

Blondin stopped and looked at Robert. He held out his hand to him, and murmured words in French, and Robert, not knowing what to do, said, "Thank you, sir!" Then Blondin turned away and passed up

the stairs to his dressing-room, nor did he turn his head for a moment to acknowledge the cheers that followed him. . . . There was some comic byplay with the man who had been left on the platform—a pretence that he could not get down, but Robert did not wait for the end of it.

"Come on," he said to Margaret "Let's go home now!"

Margaret followed him, and when they were out of the exhibition, she took hold of his arm. "My heart was in my mouth," she said, "that time he slipped. Weren't you afeard then, Darkie?"

"No," he said. "He did that on purpose. A man like that doesn't slip."

"Would you not have been afeard when you got up there? You might have turned giddy or something!"

He shook his head. "What would there be to be afeard of? Yon man's as sure-footed on a rope as you are on the ground."

"You've a terrible nerve, Darkie!"

"Och, no!"

They crossed the two bridges, stopping for a while on the second of them to look towards the harbour where they could see the lights of the cross-channel steamers. The wind blowing down from the lough came coolly across their cheeks.

"I'd love to be on one of them boats," said Robert.

"My ma'll never let you," Margaret replied

"I'll mebbe not ask her," he retorted.

They walked on towards the shop, and when they were nearly at the door, Robert turned to Margaret and said, "Don't say anything to her about me wantin' Blondin to carry me!"

"All right, Darkie," she answered, wondering why he made the request.

"It 'ud mebbe upset her," he added, as if he understood her thoughts. But the truth was that he was suddenly afraid of his mother.

IX

The news of Robert's exploit at the exhibition had already reached his mother. There were some among the audience who knew him, and they had hurried away to spread the news. "Do you know what Darkie Dunwoody done?" . . . It had come to her variously. One story was that Robert had been carried across the rope by Blondin and had narrowly missed falling! . . . When Margaret and Robert climbed the stairs to the return-room which was now the kitchen, they realised immediately they saw their mother that she knew what had happened. Her face was extraordinarily stern, and her eyes seemed suddenly to blaze when she saw her son.

"You born idiot!" she shouted at him, and the sound of her voice startled him, for she rarely shouted. "What sort of a way was that to behave? Makin' a show of yourself——"

He did not speak, but stood dumbly before her.

"An' you, Margaret," she continued, turning to her daughter, "what were you thinkin' to let him do it!"

"It wasn't her fault," Robert said. "She tried to stop me."

"Tried to stop you! You, at your age, actin' the child. Are you a want-wit or what?"

She paused, as if she expected him to reply, but he did not do so. He moved in a restive manner, and his breath began to come and go quickly.

"Stand still," she said, "an' answer me. You're a grown-up lad, near seventeen you are, an' should have some wit in your skull. Was that the way to carry on before the town, like a clown out of a circus? There isn't a neighbour doesn't know about it. Not one. An' the half of them think you're astray in the head. An' me took pride in you! . . ." For a moment her voice trembled, and the anger in her eyes was almost drowned, but she recovered herself. "When they told me first, I thought you were killed." Her voice hardened. "What do you think would have happened if the man had taken you at your word, an' had dropped you?"

Then Robert smiled. "There would have been a terrible mess on the floor," he said.

Her rage became unrestrained. The shock of the first rumour had torn her nerves to pieces, but she had contrived to keep control of herself until this piece of flippancy overthrew her. She lashed him with her tongue, while Margaret and Mattie and Alec stood dumbly by, too stunned by her wrath to speak. Robert listened until her rage was exhausted. The dark flush on his face had deepened as his mother reviled him until now he seemed like an Indian.

"Is that all you have to say?" he said, when she had done.

"No——"

"Well, it's all I'll listen to, then. I'm sick, sore an' tired of this house. Sick, sore an' tired of it, I am. You've talked to me as you wouldn't talk to a dog,

an' I'm sick of it. I've tholed enough. I'll thole no more!"

Alec rose to restrain him. "Robert," he said severely, but Robert threw him aside. "Hell roast you," he said furiously; "leave me alone, you!" The oath rapped out of his mouth as explosively as if it were a shot from a gun, and the sound of it in that room, where oaths were never heard, was as terrible as blasphemy in a church. His mother rose at him.

"Go to your bed," she commanded.

"I'll go to no bed in this house," he replied, turning and running down the stairs to the shop. "I can't bear it or you either—you an' your family, the whole damn lot of yous!"

Margaret, who had tried to prevent him from leaving the room, went after him. "Robert, Robert!" she called to him, but he did not wait to answer her. They could hear the shop-door being opened and then violently slammed. For a moment there was deep silence. Then Margaret's sobbing came sounding up the stairs to them. They rose, Mrs. Dunwoody and Mattie and Alec, and made their way down to the shop.

"Open the door and call him back," Mrs. Dunwoody said, and Margaret, already struggling with the handle, did so.

They came out of the shop and stood in the dark street.

"There he is," said Alec, pointing to the figure of his brother who was running towards the bridge.

"Go after him," Mrs. Dunwoody said, her voice now very low and quiet. "Go after him, man, an' fetch him back!"

But Alec could not catch up with his brother and he returned alone and despondent.

"I called to him, but he wouldn't stop," he said.

"He'll come back in the mornin'," said his mother. "Come, daughter," she continued, turning to Margaret, who was crying by the fire; "come to your bed."

"I'll wait up for him," Alec said, "in case he comes back!"

"Do," said Mrs. Dunwoody.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

I

He could hear Alec's heavy steps behind him, as he ran over the bridge and along the Sand Quay, but he did not slacken his pace, even when Alec's panting entreaties to him to stop reached his ears. If Mattie or Margaret had followed him, he might have stopped, but Alec! . . . He felt a disgust for Alec rising within him. "The oul' Jenny-jo!" he said, and ran still harder. His brother's footsteps died away, and he knew that Alec was not pursuing him any longer. Alec was too short of breath to run much distance. "An' mebbe he's not so damned anxious to have me back," Robert thought. He was short of breath now himself, and he slowed down to a walking pace, and then, assuring himself that he was not followed, he stopped and rested. There were heaps of sand, red and brown and gray, lying on the quay, where it had been thrown from the lighters on the Lagan. He remembered that the lightermen sometimes slept on their boats, and he wondered whether any of them were on board now. He might get a lie-down for the night. He stepped off the quay on to the deck of the nearest boat and listened at the top of the cabin-stairs, but could not hear any sound. A second lighter was moored alongside the first one, and he stepped across the gap between them, and explored it, too. It also was empty. He descended the

steps into the dark cabin, listening as he descended, and stood for a moment or two in the dark, as if waiting to be challenged, but nothing happened. He felt in his pocket for matches, but the box he carried was empty. He groped about the cabin, and then, suddenly overcome with fatigue, sank into a bunk and fell asleep.

It was still dark when he awoke, but he could hear footsteps above his head, and he realised that the lighter was no longer moored alongside the quay. He sat up, feeling cramped, and for a little while tried to sort out his thoughts. He had run away from home! That was the first and overwhelming thought in his mind. He did not know what the time was, but at least it was several hours since he had slammed the shop-door behind him and taken to the street. All this time, Mattie and Margaret and his mother and even Alec would be wondering where he was. Alec would probably have gone to the police-barracks and told the peelers about him! . . . He began to cry. He must have been crying before he realised what he was doing, for a tear suddenly splashed on his hand. He did not try to control his tears, but let them roll unchecked down his cheeks. He lay back again in the bunk, and listened to the slow, long steps of the lightermen as they walked along the deck, pressing the barge-poles into the bed of the river. At last, he had done what he had many times thought of doing; run away from home. He had shown his mother that he had a will of his own. Perhaps if he were to go back now, she would realise that he had a will of his own and not try to master him. . . . The morning light began to trickle into the cabin, and he sat up and looked about him. "It's not much of a place this!" he thought, and

stood up. "Of course," he continued to himself, "it's only a lighter. I wonder where it's going!"

He had often leant on the parapet of the bridge, fascinated by the sight of the men pushing the long poles into the Lagan. He remembered how he had tried to propel a log as the lightermen propelled their boats. He had stepped onto the log, carrying a broom-handle with him, and had pushed off from the bank. Then he had thrust the handle down into the river and with difficulty had kept it firmly on the bed. But when he pressed his shoulders against the handle, as the lightermen pressed their shoulders against the poles, the log moved so swiftly that he could not recover himself and he fell into the water. He had realised then with what skill the lightermen moved their boats, and for a moment or two he dallied with the idea of taking a job on a barge. True, he had longed to go to sea and no one could say that a lighterman was a sea-faring man, since he travelled only on a river! Still, to start with! . . . He began to feel hungry, and as the light in the cabin was growing stronger, he went up the steps which led to the deck. His head emerged from the cabin as the lightermen were raising themselves from the poles and preparing to carry them to the other end of the deck where they would thrust them into the river again.

"That's a brave day," said Robert to them.

The lightermen looked at him. "What the hell are you doin' there?" one of them said.

He explained his position to them.

"So you've hooked it from home, have you?"

"Aye," said Robert.

"Well, you can just hook off this lighter as quick as

you like. Don't you run away with the notion that you're goin' to get us into trouble over the head of you——"

"I thought mebbe you'd give me a job."

"I'm more likely to give you a clout on the lug, comin' on board without as much as a word of permission. Get off to hell out of this!"

Robert glanced at the banks of the river, some distance off.

"How can I?" he said.

"You can jump ashore the way you jumped aboard! . . ."

The second lighterman made a suggestion.

"We'll land him at Molly Ward's," he said. "Then we'll not lose no time over the head of him!" They were late already, he said, adding to Robert that both of them had spent the night ashore in a celebration that had left them unsuitable companions for stowaways. At Molly Ward's locks on the Lagan Canal, Robert could step ashore, and find his way back to Belfast.

"Then you won't give me a job?" said Robert.

"Och, quit coddin' yourself!" the first lighterman replied.

II

They landed him at Molly Ward's, and he stood for a while with the lock-keeper, watching the lighter go through the locks into the canal. "Take my advice, young son," the second lighterman advised him, when the lighter was through, "go home to your ma like a good boy!"

"Aye, an' tell her to give you a skelpin' for stayin' out all night!" the first one added.

Robert, enraged by this, picked up a lump of earth and flung it in the first lighterman's face.

"You young get, you!" the man spluttered, spitting the earth out of his mouth.

"Mebbe that'll learn you civility," said Robert.

The lighterman was preparing to leap ashore. "Houl' that fella," he shouted to the lock-keeper, "houl' him 'til I bate the head off him!"

"Gw'on," said the lock-keeper to Robert. "Take to your heels, boy. That man's not accountable for himself when he's had a bellyful of drink, an' by the look of him he's had more nor he can houl'!"

III

Again he was running away. Last night he had run from his mother and Alec. Now he was running from a drunken lighterman. But where was he running to? . . . He hurried along the Laganside, followed by the curses of the lighterman, and then slackened his pace to a walk when he realised that he was not being pursued. He was in a part of the town with which he was unfamiliar, for his life had been spent chiefly on the south side of the river. He had a rough notion of the district, but not an accurate one. The Botanic Gardens and Queen's College were near by. If he were to turn across these fields, he would probably reach the Malone Road, and then he would be all right; he could find his way home! . . . Home! He paused for a moment. What was he thinking about? He was not going home; he was running away from home. A nice object he would look if he were to go back now, running away for one night and then creeping home again!

Even Alec would mock him for that! No, he was not going home. He did not know where he was going, but this he knew, he was not going home. They could say what they liked, he was not going to do that. And, so resolving, he resumed his walk. The morning air was very fresh and sweet, and he felt a sense of elation as he crossed the fields. It was great value, this, to be out in the early part of the day. He took off his boots and stockings and walked barefoot through the dewy grass. How delicious was the feel of the wet grass on his feet! To walk like this was lovely, far finer than paddling in the sea. Paddling bored him because it made him feel as if his feet were bound. You strode through the sea, with the water holding you, until you were too tired to go on any longer. There was no pleasure in that. But on dew-wet grass, you felt free. You trod on it. The shining drops of dew flicked your feet and legs as if they were trying to cool them. To stand still and draw the sole of one of your feet up and down a strip of glistening grass was unimaginably pleasant. He had not noticed before how fine-looking his feet were. His toes were thin and long and he could almost grip the ground with them, they were so flexible. The soles of his feet were red now, reddened by the dew, and they had an extraordinarily clean look. Feet, hitherto, had seemed ugly to him. He had always averted his eyes when people stripped off their socks or stockings in his presence, lest he should see their ungainly feet; the ugly, discoloured nails; the big, flabby toes, covered with corns; the unaired feet, unpleasantly pale, the colour of lard. The boys and girls who ran barefoot about the streets seemed to have hides rather than skins. Their feet were hard

and always dirty. Sometimes they were sore! . . . But his own feet, on this lovely, dewy morning, were pink and shapely. He sat on a stone and rubbed his hand along his wet legs until they were dry. Then he wet his hands again with the grass! . . . There was a singular sound of birds about his ears. The world seemed to be silent, except for the great singing of birds. For a moment or two he imagined that he was alone in the world, that no other human being but himself was alive, and that his ears would be regaled by birds until he died. He stood up and looked about him. High in the trees or hidden in the hedges, he could see birds preening themselves or hopping from branch to branch or twig to twig. How marvellous that there should be so many birds in the world! Yet how little he knew about any of them! He thought that he knew what sparrows were—he called them "spadgers" when his mother was not by to hear him—but once he had been confounded by Paddy Kane who had insisted, with the support of a man standing by, that a flock of birds which Robert had called sparrows were starlings. He knew what a blackbird was like, and a thrush, but was uncertain about others. He would like now to follow the length of the hedge, identifying this bird and that bird, calling to it with its own note, utterly confusing it by singing its song. Still, what did it matter about names? Birds! That was name enough for them. There they were, fluttering and flying and twittering and cheeping, as happy as he was to be out so early on that dewy day. If he could only see a nest with eggs in it or maybe young ones! . . . Suddenly he felt hungry and sticky and conscious of unbrushed hair. He must somehow contrive to get a wash and

something to eat. He thrust his hands into the dew, and then rubbed them on his face. He knelt on his knees and hands and rubbed his face in the wet grass, shutting his eyes as he did so. Then he stood up and dried his face and hands on his handkerchief. A thrush darted out of a hedge and flew close to him across the field, chuckling as it flew, and he laughed, too. "I don't know what you're laughin' at," he said, "but I dare say you're right!" He tied the laces of his boots together, and then swung his boots round his neck, and walked on through the fields in the direction, as he thought, of the Malone Road, but it was a long while before he came to any road, and then he did not know what road it was. He deliberated for a few minutes, hoping that some one would appear who could direct him towards the town, but no one did, and he continued his walk. He came presently to a field without a gate through which he walked until he found himself in the strangest place he had ever seen. He gazed about him in astonishment, for the field had a singular shape. It was made like a great horse-shoe; its grassy banks seemed to have been built for spectators at some sort of performance. In the middle of it was a heap of stones, with a long heavy stone on top of them. They seemed to have been set there. "You would near think you were in a circus," he said to himself, as he gazed about him. He walked in the centre of the ring, and stood there, silent and unaccountably afraid. In front of him, he could see the high, dark humps of the Antrim Mountains, and seeing them, he realised that he must have come away from the town when he meant to go towards it. He was puzzled by the sense of alarm he had. The field was a queer one, indeed,

but what was there to be afraid of? He moved away from the centre of the ring and climbed on to the bank and looked about him. That place over there, reaching out to the mountains, must be the Bog Meadows, where there was great skating in the wintertime. He had heard of them many times, but had never seen them before. And this place, what sort of a place was it at all? Who in the wide, earthly world would ever think of making a field this shape? Men had made it—of that he felt certain—unless it was like the Giant's Causeway that looked as if it had been made, but, according to all accounts, was not made at all. He walked round the ring until he found himself again at the place where he had entered the field. An old man approached him.

"That's a brave day!" Robert said.

The old man paused and looked at him. "Aye," he said, "it is!"

"What kind of a place is this at all?" Robert asked, turning to survey the field.

The old man gazed at him in astonishment. "D'you mane t'say you never heard tell of it?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"I wouldn't be askin' you about it if I had!"

"But you have the sound of a Belfast fella!" the old man persisted.

"That's just what I am—a Belfast fella. I was born in this place," said Robert.

"An' yit you never heard tell of the Giant's Ring! Well, man dear, that bates all I ever was toul'!"

"Is that what its name is? The Giant's Ring! Man dear! It's a queer-lookin' place!"

"Quare's the word for it! Quare, indeed! An' quare things happen in it!"

"What kind of queer things?"

The expression on the old man's face changed very quickly, from one of serene simplicity to one of cunning. "Oh, never mind," said he, nodding his head and turning away. "Never you bother your head. There's plenty of quare things a person might see, but he'd be the quare oul' gumph to go an' talk about them! There's things happen in that place that I wouldn't put a name til!"

"In the name of God, man, what kind of things are they?" Robert exclaimed, glancing fearfully at the Giant's Ring.

"Quare things!" the old man replied, turning down the corners of his mouth as if to signify that he would say no more.

"Bad things?" Robert asked.

"What d'you mane, bad things?"

"Well, fellas an' girls——"

The old man made a disdainful gesture. "Not at all!" he said. "Not at all! *Quare* things! Things that moidher your mind! In the oul', ancient days!"

"D'you mean ghosts?"

"Now, I'm not sayin' what I mane! You're young an' headstrong, an' you don't know the half mebbe that you think you know——"

"I never said anything about what I know!" Robert interrupted.

"Mebbe not, but there's a quare lot of hintin' in your talk, as if you were sayin' to yourself what a well-learned young fella you are, an' what an ignorant oul' man I am——"

"Sir," said Robert indignantly. "I never hinted nor thought any such a thing! I wouldn't be so lackin' in respect for you! I only asked out of curiosity!"

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," the old man replied in a mollified tone. "I'm not the one til take offence where none's meant, an' all I say to you is this, I wouldn't be in that place after it's dark this night or any other night, for a mint o' money. If the King of England was to come here on his bended knees an' say til me, 'John McClurg, I'll give you my crown an' my daughter an' all I have,' I wouldn't say 'Thank ye!' til him. I would not in sang! An' that's the last word you'll get out o' me, for I ought not til be talkin' about it at all! You don't know who's listenin' til you!"

He glanced nervously about him as he spoke, and Robert, himself slightly unnerved, glanced round, too. "There's nobody listenin' to you but me," he said.

"Och, man dear, have wit," McClurg exclaimed impatiently. "I'm not talkin' about people you can *see!*"

"Ghosts?" said John.

The old man became cautious and cunning again. "Now, name no names," he said, "an' make no remarks that could be took in a personal way. Some that might be mentioned, don't like bein' mentioned. An' anyway you never know how a person that's mentioned might take a remark. He might see a meanin' in it that was never intended, an' mebbe do somethin' til you that you'd sorely rue all your life. For there's more in that place, my young fella, than you can see on the grass, so take my advice an' mind yourself, an' don't be blather-skitin' roun' that Ring the way you would roun' the junction on a Saturday night! I'll lave you now, for I have work to do!"

"Thank you for your information," Robert said.

"Aw, not at all, not at all!" the old man murmured, as he moved away. He had not gone far when he

turned back. "What I can't understand," he said, "is how you that's a Belfast fella don't know about it! Where in the world d'you live?"

"Over in Ballymacarrett!"

"Och, aye, that explains everything! Over in the County Down! Sure, the people over there knows nothin' at all! They're an ignorant lot! They have no rarin' at all!"

"They're as well reared in Down as they are in Antrim, an' mebbe a bit better, for there's the queer good blood in Down," Robert angrily retorted.

"Well, just as you say!" the old man remarked and turned away.

"Hi, wait a minute," Robert called after him.

"I can't stop here all day——"

"I'm not askin' you to stop all day! What's them stones for?" Robert pointed to the cromlech in the centre of the ring. A look of fear spread over the old man's face. "You have no wit at all," he said in a flickering voice. "No wit at all you haven't, to go on askin' questions like that! Be said by me, boy, an' go home like a good lad an' don't be standin' there annoyin' the oul' people——"

"Oul' people! What oul' people?"

"Did you never hear tell of the oul' ancient people?"

"There's been all sorts of oul' people in the world! What sort do you mean?" said Robert.

"The oul' sort that was here long ago. I forget the name they called them, but they were fearful people an' this place was where they come til say their prayers——"

"Druids, do you mean?" said Robert, hushing his voice.

"Aye, that was their name. Oh, dear, oh, dear, what

am I stan'in' here talkin' about them for, an' me with my work to do, an' them mebbe stan'in' listenin' til us!" He moved away from the field as quickly as he could, and when he had passed through the gate, he stopped and turned. "Come here, wee fella!" he said, almost in a whisper. "Come here till I'll tell you somethin'."

Robert followed him through the gate. "They call that place there a crumlick," he said, pointing to the cromlech. "An' it was on that big stone on the top that they offered up their sacrifices!"

"Sacrifices!"

"Aye, like the Jews did in the Oul' Testament! Only it wasn't sheep nor goats they offered up til their God, but people."

"Livin' people!"

"As livin' as you or me. Dead people was no use til their God! . . . D'you mind about Abraham and Isaac?" Robert nodded his head. "Like that," the old man continued, "*only they did it!*"

His hands were trembling as he spoke, and his face seemed drawn with fear.

"An' they're still doin' it," he said. "You never know when they'll come down the mountains an' across the Bog there, an' them mebbe havin' a young girl or a lad the like of yourself with them, an' when they get him or her there on top of that big stone! . . . Och, ochanee, what am I sayin' at all—me that has til live an' do my work here, an' them mebbe listenin' til every word I'm sayin'! Come away, son dear, an' not be annoyin' them!"

"Och, I'll just go an' have another wee look at the stones!" said Robert.

"Stones! Man, boy, them's not *stones!* Them's an altar!"

"Well, I'll have a look at it anyway!"

The old man did not stay to argue with him any more. He hurried along the lane, almost as if he feared that he was being followed. Robert looked after him until he was out of sight. "You oul' gomeril!" he said under his breath. "You an' your Druids an' your altars!" He returned to the field and walked to the centre of the Ring and stood by the cromlech. "If the half that oul' fella said was true," he thought, "there must have been queer carryin's-on in this place!"

He climbed on top of the cromlech and stood for a few moments surveying the scene. "What in the world will I do now?" he suddenly demanded. Then he laid himself down on the long topstone that stood at a strange angle to the other stones. "I'm just like one of the offerin's!" he said, and laughed aloud as he said it. His eyes were gazing at the blue sky above him. White balls of cloud rolled through it; lovely white balls of cloud that must, he thought, be full of snow. The sun shone on him, but was not yet strong enough to warm him. He could feel its rays on his face, and on his hands, when he folded them across his breast. If he were to lie there for an hour or two, he would soon be warm all over. . . . He closed his eyes, and lay very still for a few moments. Then he opened them again and stirred uneasily. He could not hear any sound. Birds had been singing when he climbed on to the stones, and he remembered hearing cattle lowing somewhere in the meadows. But there was no sound to be heard now. . . . He sat up and looked about him. The Ring looked as it had looked when he first came to

it. Nothing seemed to be different. But there was no sound to be heard. He tried to stand up, but his feet slipped from beneath him, and he fell flat on the big heavy topstone, and suddenly fear seized him, and he cried out, "Oh, Holy Christ!" He struggled on to his side and fell off the stone on to the ground. Then he scrambled to his feet and ran across the Ring to the gate, while his heart violently thumped.

"Oh, Holy Christ!" he cried as he ran. "Oh, Holy Christ!"

IV

He did not stop until he had run a long way down the lane that led to the Ring. His heart was beating so quickly that he put his hand to his side as if he were trying to make it beat more slowly. Its swift beat hurt him, and he sat down on a grassy ledge to rest. His mouth felt parched, and he could scarcely breathe because of the gulping in his throat. He looked about him in a dazed way until the beating of his heart subsided and his breath came less pantingly. He felt sick, and he lay back in the grass and closed his eyes. "You dam' fool," he suddenly said aloud, "runnin' away like that. Lettin' that oul' tow-wit make you feel afeard!" He sat up and, after a moment or two, got on to his feet. "Runnin' away from a lot of oul' stones!" He turned and looked back towards the turn in the lane which led to the Ring. "I'm near in the mind to go back," he said, "an' lie down on it again just to show I'm not afeard!" He paused for a few moments. "An' I would, too, on'y I'm sore wi' hunger!"

He walked away, and presently came to a road where a man directed him to Belfast. "I'll get myself some-

thin' to eat," he said, as he set himself towards the city. He had forgotten his hunger, but now he was intensely aware of it. His last meal had been his tea, taken before he and Margaret had set out for the exhibition. The quarrel with his mother had prevented him from getting any supper. He had never been without food for so long a time before. Fifteen hours! More than fifteen! That was a long while! Well, men that went knocking around the world were sometimes famishing for days. This would be good practice for him! The queer thing about his hunger was that it gave him no pain. He had imagined that starving people suffered agony, but his hunger was pleasant. He liked the sensation of emptiness he had and listened to the odd rumbling noise in his inside with a sort of delight. How he would enjoy his breakfast when he got it! There was an eating-place near the Town Hall, a round wooden hut, standing by itself near the Morgue, and owned by the Irish Temperance League. He would go there and get a meal. Alec and he had gone there one time. They had bought large cups of very hot coffee and big round farls of soda-bread with sultanas in them. . . . He would order that for his breakfast and a couple of boiled eggs. Or mebbe fried eggs. If he had them boiled, he could break them into a cup, with the yolk and the white mixed up together, or if he had them fried he could have ham with them. Two cups of coffee and two eggs, fried or boiled, and mebbe a bap or wheaten-bread. . . . His thoughts ran on food. Would it be right to have a farl or treacle-bread—he called it "trayckle-bread"—with ham and eggs? Or would treacle-bread be too sweet? This was great value, wondering what you would have to eat. When he

was younger, he had sometimes imagined himself alone in a world full of shops. A long street of shops, all stuffed with desirable things, mostly edible, stretched from the top of the world to the bottom of it, and he ate his way from one end of the world to the other. . . . He felt in his pockets. The change from the half-sovereign that his mother had given him so that he might pay for admission for Margaret and himself to the exhibition was still in his pocket. Eight shillings! Many a man had faced the world with less! Anyhow, he could afford to buy himself a good breakfast. He hurried through the city, and, passing the Empire music-hall and the Morgue, climbed a short flight of wooden steps and entered the coffee-house. A man was sitting at a table, eating sausages, and Robert, as he walked past him, sniffed their savoury smell.

"Yes!" said the woman behind the counter.

"A cup of coffee and two sausages!" he said.

He ate the meal too quickly. He regretted that he had not eaten the sausages very slowly and sipped the coffee so that he might enjoy them for a longer while. But it had been pleasant to fill his mouth with nearly half a sausage and feel his teeth crunching through the tasty mince. And the big draughts of coffee were delicious! Two cups of coffee he had drunk, two sausages he had eaten, and a whole farl of wheaten-bread—for there was no treacle-bread on sale! That was a good breakfast, and he was almost in the mind to say his thanks to God for it—only he was shy about praying in public. When Alec and he came to this place to tea, they had seen a Catholic girl crossing herself before she began her meal. Robert had admired her for her piety and had remarked to Alec that she seemed not to know that anybody was looking at her. "Ah, they're

good people, the Papishes, about their religion!" said Alec. "They're not a bit bashful about it!"

"I'll dare you to say your grace, Alec!" Robert said then.

"That's no way to talk about religion!" Alec sternly replied. "What kind of a spirit would that be—thankin' God just for the cod of the thing! Ate your tea, man, an' quit bletherin'!"

He rose from the table and walked to the counter and paid for his breakfast. "Well, thank God, anyway, for a good meal," he said, as he left the temperance tavern. And now he had the day before him. What should he do? Alec's shop was near by, and when he recalled that fact, he felt a sudden, sharp desire to see his brother. He walked towards Cromac Street, steadily slackening his pace as he approached Alec's shop. This was a queer thing to be doing! Anybody would think he was trying to get back! . . . He halted in the doorway of a house opposite to the shop. Alec was not to be seen, and Robert wondered if he might dart across the street and peer through the window at him. He made an excuse for what he could not deny was weakness. To be gaping into his brother's shop-window on the very morning after he had abandoned his family might be considered a sign of failing purpose. . . . "But, sure, it's only natural," he said to himself, "to want to see how he's takin' it."

He crossed the road, and peered into the window, but could not see Alec because the interior of the shop was dark. He was afraid lest Alec should come to the door, and so he hurriedly re-crossed the street, and stood again for a while in a doorway, hoping that his brother would appear. But Alec did not come.

A boy passed by. "Hi, wee lad!" said Robert, taking

a halfpenny out of his pocket, "would you like to earn a 'make'!"

"I would just," said the boy.

"D'ye see them buckets over there?" Robert continued, pointing to the pile of zinc pails which were stacked by the door of the shop. The boy nodded. "Well, I'll give you this 'make' if you'll go over and cowp them!"

"What'll I do that for?"

"Och, never mind. Just cowp them an' run!"

The boy regarded Robert and then regarded the buckets. "Is this a cod or what?" he demanded. "Are you havin' me on?"

"I am not. I want to see the fella that keeps the shop, an' I can't think of any other way of gettin' him to come to the door! . . ."

"I'll do it for a 'wing,'" said the boy, bargaining for a penny.

"You'll do it for a 'make' or you'll not do it at all."

The boy hesitated for a moment. "All right," he said, "gimme the 'make' and I'll do it."

"If you don't," Robert replied as he gave him the coin, "I'll follow you an' wring your neck for you!"

"You can trust me," said the boy.

He crossed the road and cautiously approached the door of Alec's shop. He edged nearer and nearer to the buckets, and then suddenly heaved them over and ran away as fast as he could run. The clatter brought Alec to the door. . . .

"He looks more upset about the buckets nor he does about me," said Robert, as he sorrowfully turned away.

He wandered off, more miserable than he knew, and presently found himself by the sheds in which the

cargoes from the cross-channel steamers were stored. If only he had enough money he could go to England or to Scotland. He walked along the quays, surveying the boats, and then sat for a long while on a stack of timber, while he gazed across the Lagan at the shipyard and listened to the incessant hammering of rivetters as they beat the sides of new ships together. He sat there until he felt hungry again, and then, after a meal at another temperance tavern, by a ferry, he lounged to the end of the harbour and stayed there until the dusk began to fall. A sense of solitude oppressed him, and he felt unaccountably sad and depressed. His eyes filled with tears. His courage was subsiding fast, and the audacity of his adventure had ceased to enthrall him. He wanted to go home. In the early morning, when the dew was on his bare feet, he had felt like a hero for whom the day could not be long enough, but now, after several hours of aimless wandering, after the sight of Alec patiently lifting up the pile of buckets and seemingly unconcerned about his brother, the day stretched too far in front of him. Time was too long. Evening would come, and night, and the next day and the day after. . . . His tears seemed to rise up from his heart. He could feel them flowing up through his body and filling his eyes. He could not see any more. The streets and the people in them were a wet blur. He wanted to go home again. Margaret and Mattie and his mother would be waiting for him! . . . The figure of his mother appeared in his mind. He saw her tired, firm face and her fine eyes, full of love and reproach, and when, in his imagination, she turned to him and he saw how her heart was heavy with grief, he could no longer control his tears, and felt them flowing

down his cheeks. "All right, ma!" he said aloud, "I'll come back!" The desire for adventure seemed to be dead in him. At that moment he was in the mood to do whatever his mother asked of him, to be a minister, to be anything she wished him to be. His love for her was now so wide and deep that he could not walk home quickly enough, and he began to run. Daylight had gone, and the darkness which lay upon the bridges was faintly lit by the yellow glare of gas-lamps. He stopped for a moment to recover his breath, and then hurried on again. Presently, the "Islandmen," as the workers at the shipyard were called, would come pouring through the streets in a great black mass, and he would be hindered on his way home. . . . He came to the corner of a dark and dingy street, running parallel with the Lagan, called Short Strand. If he were to go down it, he would avoid the "Islandmen" and delay. He hesitated for a few moments. The street and its miserable environs were mainly inhabited by Catholics of a rough class, and he feared to pass through it, after dark, lest he should be attacked. In one of the houses lived two idiot brothers whose heads were so tiny that each idiot was nicknamed "Johnnie Wee Head" or "Johnnie Pin Head." The imbeciles horrified him. Their horrible heads, that seemed to be no bigger than a man's clenched fist, filled him with a disgust that almost made him feel physically sick. If he were to meet one or both of them in the dark. . . . He shuddered, and almost turned away, but his impatience to be at home conquered his fear of the crétins, and he entered the street and walked by the wall of a timber mill. On the other side of the street were the mean

slum houses, and standing in the lit doorway of one of them were both of the idiot brothers. Quite distinctly he could see them, their dreadful heads nodding as they gabbled to each other! He stopped and shrank into the shadow of a gateway, hoping that the sensation of sickness which had come over him would quickly pass. Then, when he felt that he had recovered, he came out of the shadow still gazing apprehensively at the imbeciles. One of them came away from the door and peered at something behind Robert. He uttered a yell, and came across the street, followed by his brother. Terror overpowered Robert. He turned to go back by the way he had come, and as he did so his arms were seized, he was whirled round, and he saw a gang of rough youths and heard a thick harsh voice shouting at him, "Curse King William, you Protestant 'get' you!" Then, because he did not reply, a fist suddenly struck his face, and he could feel blood dribbling from his nose.

V

There were five lads in the gang which had seized hold of Robert. One of them, with an evil face in which little vicious eyes gleamed like the eyes of a rat, had hold of his right arm and was twisting it so that he felt it must presently be torn from its socket, while another lad, undersized and sore-eyed, gripped his left arm, pinching the flesh with his nails until it was sore. The lad at his right arm seemed to be the leader of the gang.

"Curse King William!" he shouted. "Go on, damn ye, curse him!"

Robert did not speak. He shut his lips very tightly and tried not to cry with the pain he was suffering.

"Do you hear me spakin' to you?"

"I—I won't curse him," Robert moaned, and instantly the members of the gang gathered round him and beat him on the face and body with their fists. One of them kicked him on the shins, and the lad who had pinched his left arm began to pull his hair. He could not prevent himself from crying out with pain. "Oh, stop!" he cried.

"Well, curse him then!"

His lips trembled, and the tears filled his eyes. He paused for a moment while they stood around him, waiting for him to curse King William. Then he tightened his lips. . . .

"Are you not goin' to curse him?" the leader demanded, giving his arm a twist as he spoke.

"No!"

They pressed closely about him, thrusting his head back so that it seemed to him it must break away from his body. "Curse King William or I'll pull the bloody face off you!" the leader snarled.

Robert could not move or speak. They held him so tightly that only a gurgling sound came from his throat as he tried to say, "No, I won't curse him!" and the sound alarmed some of his tormentors.

"He's chokin'!" one of them exclaimed, hauling the leader away as he did so. They stood a few feet away from Robert, and watched him while he coughed and gasped.

"Have you had enough?" the leader demanded.

Robert put a hand to his mouth and nose and then withdrew it because his touch hurt him. There was blood on his fingers.

"I'll not curse him for you," he said with despairing courage.

They crowded round him again, pulling his hair and beating his skull with their knuckles.

"It'll be the best for you to curse him," one of them said.

"But I'll not curse him," said Robert.

He could see the vicious face of the leader of the gang turning more vicious still, and he shut his eyes and waited for the blow which he felt was coming—but it did not fall on him. He heard a shout, "Here's a 'peeler,' boys!" and suddenly the grip on his arms was released and he felt free. He opened his eyes and saw that the members of the clan, except the leader, were running away. The leader stood still for a second looking at the advancing policeman, and while he looked, resolution came into Robert's heart. He ran at him and gave him a violent kick, and fled, leaving the leader yelping with pain. And as he ran, he cried. His body shook with sobs. "They didn't fight fair," he said aloud. "They were afeard to fight me fair, though I wasn't their match. They'd no pluck! But I wouldn't give in to them. I wouldn't curse King William for them. I was too brave to give in to them. Wouldn't anybody else have give in to them except me? I know I was brave, for all the way I'm cryin' my eyes out!"

He turned and looked back to the scene of his torture. There were no signs of the clan. The policeman was standing gazing about him, but was not in the mood to make investigations.

"All the same," Robert said, still speaking aloud, "I'd 'a' been glad to give in to them—only I couldn't. I was heart-feared of them hittin' me, but I wanted to

be brave more nor I wanted to give in, an' I couldn't let it be said the like of them made me do anything. Dirt, that's what they are! Just dirt!"

While he stood in the shadow of a church near the new bridge, stanching the flow of blood from his nose with his handkerchief, he heard himself addressed, and, turning round, saw Brenda Cairnduff and a girl whose name he did not know.

"Is that you, Darkie?" Brenda asked.

"It is!" he replied.

"I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure!" She hurriedly turned to her friend. "Well, good-night, Agnes! I'll not keep you——!"

"Oh, I'm in no hurry!" her friend answered.

"Well, I'll be a good while——!"

Her friend realised that Brenda wished to be left alone with Robert. "Good-night, then!" she said. "I'll see you Sunday!"

"On Sunday!" Brenda replied, as her friend walked away. "We've just come from a committee meeting in the church," she explained to Robert. "Oh, Darkie, whatever made you run away! Your mother's in a fearful state about you, and Alec never got a wink of sleep the whole night, sitting up for you, thinking, mebbe, you'd come back!"

"Oh!" he said sulkily. He had no wish to talk to Brenda then.

"Come on home now, like a good boy——!"

"I'll go home when I want to," he said.

He was still in the shadow of the church. She had not yet seen his bruised and bloody face. If only she would go away, he could slip across the street to where

the logs were lying in the Lagan, and dip his handkerchief in the water and wipe his face. . . . "Well, come on with me!" she coaxed, putting her hand on his arm. He turned as she spoke and the light of a lamp fell on his face. She started back and uttered a little scream. "Oh, Darkie, you've been fighting!" she wailed. "Your face is covered with blood!"

"Mebbe you'll lave me now," he said sharply, turning back to the shadow.

She stood for a moment or two irresolute and without speaking. "I'm sorry I spoke to you," she said at last. "I didn't dream you'd stoop to fighting in the street——!"

"I didn't fight, I tell you. I was bate by Papishes up there!"

"Oh, Darkie, I'm sorry!" She took hold of his arm again.

"Och, lave me alone, can't you!" He shook himself free from her. "I'm in no state to be seen——"

"Well, come with me, then, and I'll bathe your face for you. We'll go down the back way and nobody'll see you!"

He felt ashamed of his gruff abruptness. "Thank you, Brenda," he said. "I'm sorry I was short with you just then, but I couldn't help myself. Them fellas gave me the quare hammerin', an' I was ashamed of anybody seeing my face!"

"Never mind," she said, putting her arm in his.

She led him by dark streets to Modesty Row, in which there was a gateway giving admission to the entry at the back of the Terrace. "I'll see if it's open," she said, but when she tried it, she found that it was bolted.

"Wait here a minute!" she said, "and I'll run into the house the front way and come out by the back and open it!"

He waited, as she bade him, and presently he heard the creaking sound of the rusty lock being withdrawn. They walked down the wet, earthy entry together until they came to the back door of Brenda's house. "It's lucky my mother's out!" she whispered to him. He glanced past her to where he could see the back door of his mother's shop. Here he was only a few yards from his home. Why was he bothering his head about Brenda when he had only to go a few steps down the entry and open a door and walk into his own home and be attended to by his mother? He hesitated for a few moments. Brenda moved nearer to him, and suddenly she began to laugh. He saw that she was looking across the entry to where the roof of the Salvation Army barracks could be seen rising above the wall. "D'you mind the time you fell through the roof and near frightened the drunk man out of his senses!" she said, pressing his arm in hers. He nodded his head. "You were always a desperate wee fellow!" she added, admiringly. He did not reply. He was wondering how much longer he could bear to remain here, talking to this girl, when his mother was only a moment's walk from him. "But you'll have to settle down some day, Darkie!" Brenda continued. "You can't go running wild all your life!"

How carefully she spoke. He glanced at her. Yes, she was nice-looking. Standing there in the dark, with her arm in his, talking in her genteel way, she looked nice. Only——

"Come in, now," she said, drawing him towards her.

"I put the kettle on the fire the minute I got into the kitchen, and it'll soon be boiling. Then I can bathe your face with nice warm water!"

He let himself be drawn towards her until they were standing close together.

"Kiss me, Darkie!" she said, putting her face up to his.

"My face is all blood!" he said.

"No matter!" she replied.

"All right, then!"

He kissed her, and she laid her head against his shoulder and seemed content to remain there. "Put your arms round me, Darkie!" she whispered.

"Hadn't we better go in?" he answered. "The kettle'll be boilin' over!"

She withdrew herself quickly from him. "Of course!" she said. "I was forgetting about your face!"

She led him into the kitchen and made him sit down by the fire. "Poor Darkie," she said, looking at his bruised mouth and nose. "They must have given you a fearful beating!"

"They did," he said, "but one of them'll bear the marks of me for a while. I hope I lamed him for life!"

"Aren't Papishes awful?" she murmured.

"Och, they're no worse than we are! I've seen one of them bate up the way I was!" He walked across the kitchen to where a small looking-glass hung on a wall. "Boys-a-boys!" he exclaimed, "but I look a sight to scare the world. I wonder you're not afeard of me, Brenda!"

"I'd never be afraid of you, Darkie, and I wouldn't care if I was!"

"Is the kettle boilin' yet?" he said abruptly.

She brought a tin basin into the kitchen and poured some of the hot water into it. "I'll make a cup of tea for you," she said, "when I've finished bathing your face!"

"I can do that myself——!"

"Let me do it, Darkie!"

She made him sit by the table, under the gas-light, so that she could more easily see what she was doing, and then very gently she sponged the blood off his face. "It doesn't look so bad, now!" she said. "It's a wee bit swollen, but that's all! Just dry yourself, will you, while I get you a cup of tea!"

"I don't want any tea, Brenda. I've given you too much trouble already!"

She turned to him quickly and smiled. "It's no trouble, Darkie!" They were silent for a moment or two, and then, as he dried his face on the towel she had given him, she said, "I expect you're starving with the hunger!"

"I am hungry," he admitted.

"It'll not take me long to make some toast for you!"

"Och, don't put yourself out on my account. Sure, I'll get something when I go in!"

But she did not pay any heed to him. She placed the toaster in front of the fire, and laid two slices of bread on it. "I dare say there's an egg in the house," she said, bustling into the scullery. He watched her, as she ran to and from the kitchen. "What are you thinking, Darkie?" she said.

"Nothing!" he answered.

But in his mind was the thought that she was nice-looking. Her movements were quick and sure, and when she turned suddenly, she turned gracefully. When

she knelt in front of the fire, he saw how slender her ankles were. She had pretty legs! They sat down to tea together. She had boiled two eggs for him and had turned them into a cup and beaten them up for him. There was a plate of hot buttered toast on the table. The tea tasted good!

"You're quare an' kind, Brenda!" he said.

"Kind!" she exclaimed. "I'd do far more than that for you, Darkie!"

"Why?" he demanded.

She hesitated. "I wonder at you asking such a question," she said.

He finished his tea and stood up. "I'll have to go in now," he said.

"You're in no hurry," she answered. "Stay till my mother comes home. She's up at my aunt's at Ballyhackamore. She'll be greatly pleased to see you home again!"

But he would not wait. "I ought to go in an' tell my ma I've come home!" he said.

"Very well, Darkie!" she murmured, and then added, "I'll come with you!"

She moved towards the hall, leading to the street-door, but he did not follow her. "I'll go the back way," he said. She came back into the kitchen and stood beside him. "Darkie," she said, "wouldn't it be nice —wouldn't it be nice——!"

"Wouldn't what be nice?"

She glanced at the table where the remains of the meal lay and then about the kitchen. "Oh, nothing!" she said, and her voice was strangely altered. "Come on!"

She opened the door that led to the yard, and he

followed her to the entry. They had to walk carefully now for there was no light and the ground was wet and dirty. "I'll take hold of your arm," she said.

"All right!" he replied.

"Listen, Darkie!"

"Listen to what?"

"Listen! I want to—no, it doesn't matter."

He laughed at her. "You're a quare one, Brenda," he said.

"Queer! What's queer about me?" Her voice had an angry note in it.

"Och, everything!" he said.

"I don't wonder the Papishes hit you," she said. "There are times when I could hit you myself!"

She turned and left him. "Aren't you comin' with me?" he said.

"No," she answered. "Good-night!"

"But wait a minute, Brenda——"

"Good-night!" she said, shutting the door. He heard the bolt being pushed into its socket. "Brenda!" he called, but she did not answer. Instead, he heard her steps as she walked across the yard, and, after a moment, the sound of the scullery-door being opened and closed again. He waited for a few moments, and then went down the entry to the back-door of his home. It was ajar, and he pushed it open and went into the yard. As he did so, Alec came out of a shed at the side.

"Who's that?" he called out.

"Me, Alec!" Robert replied.

"Oh, it's you, is it? So you've come home again—with your tail atween your legs!"

"I've not——!"

"Don't answer me, boy! I've had enough to thole through you! Up the whole night, waitin' an' watchin' for you, an' at my work all day. I'm sick, sore an' tired of your performances!"

Robert felt anger rising in him. "You didn't look so damned anxious about me when I saw you this mornin'," he said.

"This mornin'! When?" Alec demanded.

"When the wee fella cowped your buckets on you. I was standin' on the other side of the street!"

"You whelp, it was you set him on to cowp them!"

"I wanted to see you!"

"See me! Annoy me, that's what you wanted to do! Annoy me! God curse you, get out of my sight!"

"Where's my ma!"

"Where would she be? Tired out after searchin' the streets for you! But she could have spared herself the trouble! I knew rightly you'd come slinkin' home again! Get into the house there an' have done with your fool behaviour!"

"Are you orderin' me about, Alec!"

"Orderin'!" Alec came towards him, and even in the darkness Robert could see the anger in his eyes. "There's goin' to be a differs in this house in future, me fine fella! There's to be no more talk of makin' a minister of you or settin' you up with a fancy education. I've putt my foot down on that. You'll come intil the shop an' earn your livin' like the rest of us. An' the morra morn, you'll rise out of your bed an' go over til my shop and open it an' redd it out ready for me when I come over——!"

"Is that all you have to say, Alec?"

"All! No, nor the half of it——!"

"You can spare yourself the trouble of sayin' the rest, then! I'm not goin' to work in no shop!"

Alec seized him by the arm. "Go in," he shouted. "Go in an' go to your bed——!"

"Let go, Alec!"

"Go in, I tell you!" He tried to drag Robert towards the door that led into the shop, but Robert wrenched his arm away from him. "If you putt a finger on me," Robert said, "I'll break your jaw!"

"You that was goin' to run away break anybody's jaw! Come in, I tell you!"

Again he seized his brother's arm and tried to drag him indoors. "Hell roast you," Robert shouted, "let me go!"

Then, in his anger, Alec struck him in the face, and a fury suddenly filled Robert. "All right, then," he said, and, clenching his fists, he drove them, one after the other, full into Alec's face. Alec fell. "I've finished with you now," said Robert, as he left the yard. He ran along the entry until he reached the gate which gave on to the street. "I've finished with them all," he shouted aloud, as he opened it.

VI

He hurried through the dark streets, scarcely aware of what he was doing. He crossed the new bridge, and again found himself walking along the Sand Quay. Last night he had fled from his mother, Alec pursuing him, and now he was flying from his home again. Less than twenty-four hours had passed since he had hurried through this dark street, but he seemed to himself to have lived for years in that time. Was it only that

morning that he had paddled his bare feet in the wet grass and had lain on the big stone in the Giant's Ring? When the birds sang to him—was that no longer ago than twelve hours? Already an age seemed to have passed since the corner-boys had beaten him in the Short Strand. Half an hour ago, he was sitting with Brenda! . . . Over there, behind the dark heaps of sand, the lighter, in which he had slept last night, had lain! And here he was again, angry and fugitive, not knowing where he was going or what to do! . . . He walked on until he reached the Queen's Bridge. He leant against the parapet and looked at the boats that would presently steam out to sea. Their hulls lay low in the Lagan, for they were loaded now and awaiting only the tide. He wondered if it would be easy to steal aboard a steamer and stowaway to England or to Scotland. If one were caught! . . . "Well, sure, they can't hing you for it!" he said, as he descended the steps that led down from the bridge to the harbour, and walked past the berths of the boats. There were men standing about the decks of several of the ships—he could not hope to get aboard one of them without being seen—but presently he came to a boat which seemed to be deserted. No one was on deck, no one was standing at the gangways, nor was any one loitering on the quay itself. If he were to run up that gangway now, no one would see him. He could hide himself somewhere. . . . He walked through an opening into the shed where the steamer's cargo was stored, and looked about him. A clerk was busy in an office, filling in lists. No one else was visible. He crossed the shed and looked into the street. Raindrops began to fall, as he stood there, debating with himself. Should he try it on?

Supposing he were to get away? He had scarcely any money! He looked at the name in big letters at the top of the shed. Glasgow. What would he do in Glasgow? The rain dropped heavily now, and the cold, wet wind made him shiver. Why could he not go home? Aye, and face Alec with his jenny-jo ways! . . . He turned quickly back to the shed, and stood at the end of the gangway leading to the steerage. It was quite safe for him to go aboard. No one was about! . . . A great drop of rain fell on his hand as it rested on the rail of the gangway, and again he shuddered. "It's terrible cold," he said, as he stole quietly up the gangway on to the damp deck. He paused at the head of a dark staircase and listened. No sound. Then he went down the stairs and crept behind a pile of stuff and slid down on the floor! . . . He must have slept for a while, for presently, when the noise of moving feet awoke him, he realised that the steamer was about to sail. He could hear voices all about him, and so, lest he should be discovered, he did not dare to move, although he was cramped with lying in the narrow, hard space in which he had hidden himself. He must remain there until the morning and get ashore somehow! . . . The syren sounded, and then he could feel the ship throbbing as her engine moved. Voices were calling above his head, and very clearly he could hear people on the quayside singing a hymn to their friends on board. He was on his way to Glasgow. It was too late now to go back. The boat must be standing in the middle of the Lagan, preparing to move out to the Lough and the open sea. Oh, God, what was he doing here? Why was he running away like this? . . . The ship's movements became swifter. Thump,

thump, thump, she went, as her propellers revolved more quickly. He lay in the dark and imagined each stage of the journey. They were passing the "Island" now, where the men on the night-shift would be hard at work. Now they were passing between the Twin Islands that made a channel at the mouth of the Lagan. The swifter movement of the boat showed that it had passed from the Lagan to the Lough. Presently, it would pass out to the Irish Sea! . . .

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

I

He heard voices, and the sound of footsteps. Some one, several people, were approaching. They would find him and haul him in disgrace before the captain, who would order a sailor to rope-end him. . . . In the stories of stowaways that he had read, the captain nearly always had the shivering lad beaten with a hard, heavy rope and put to the roughest and most disagreeable work. The captain of this ship would not be able to set him to a long job, but he might have him arrested at Glasgow. That would be a poor performance, to be clapped into prison at the very start of his adventurous career! Perhaps if he were to move up a bit into the dark, he could keep himself concealed from the searchers for stowaways. It did not occur to him that the men whose voices he had heard were not searching for stowaways. It was the custom, according to the books, for a thorough search of every ship to be made soon after she left a port! He crawled along the narrow, dark space on his hands and knees until he felt certain that he could not easily be seen, and then, panting with anxiety and alarm, lay at down at full length. Stretched as he was on the deck in the dark, nobody was likely to see him. How he was to get off the boat undiscovered he did not know, nor did he dare to think about it. Probably he would be able to

slip off as easily as he had slipped on. He could tell a few lies, if necessary. . . . Anyhow, it was of little use to lie there and brood over what he must do in the morning. He would try to sleep, and, making that resolution, he turned over on his side and closed his eyes. He had almost fallen asleep when he felt a hand on his face, and he started up, striking his head against a projection, and uttered a cry.

"Ssh!" said a voice that came from behind his head. "Keep your mouth shut!"

"What is it? Who are you?" Robert whispered.

"I'm like yourself," the voice answered. "I'm gettin' a free trip!"

Robert recovered his spirit. The presence of another stowaway took some of his fear of discovery from him.

"Do you belong to Glasgow?" his companion asked.

"No, I belong to Belfast," he replied.

"Do you often do this?"

"Do what?"

"Get a free trip!"

"No," said Robert. "I've never been out of Ireland before. This is the first time I've ever done this!"

He could hear movements, and presently saw the other stowaway close beside him. "My name's Boak," the stranger said. "I've done this trip near a hunderd times!"

"A hunderd times!" Robert exclaimed.

"Aye, backwards and forwards! An' never paid a ha'penny for a trip. An' never was caught once!" Robert listened to him in astonishment. "What do you do it for?" he said.

"Ah, I just have a fancy for it!" he replied. "It's great value!"

"I don't see it!" said Robert. "D'you mean to say you come back and from Belfast to Glasgow like this a hunderd times just for the cod of the thing!"

"That's right! But it wasn't always from Belfast to Glasgow. I've been a few whiles to Ardrossan——!"

"Holy God!"

"An' Liverpool an' places like that. But I've been to Glasgow the most times. I know it brave an' well!"

"What do you do it for?" Robert asked.

"Fun! I have an ambition to go a trip on every boat that sails from Belfast across the Channel, an' I've near realised it! I'll be back in Belfast the morra night—I mane to say I'll start from Glasgow the morra night!"

"On this boat?"

"Aye. I always like to make the return trip the way I went!"

Robert began to suspect that Boak was out of his mind, and he almost decided to creep out of his hiding-place and give himself up to the first sailor he met. After all, the captain could only rope-end him or give him in charge to the police, but this daftie sitting beside him in the dark might go stark, staring mad and do him an injury that would mark him for life. He began to crawl towards the opening.

"Lie still," Boak ordered. "D'you want them to hear you?"

"I only——!"

"Wheesht, wheesht, man! I'd be mortial offended if my record was broke through you. Lie still, an' be quiet!"

Robert subsided. Perhaps it would be better to humour the man.

"What notion took you to do this?" Boak presently asked.

"Oh, just the notion of an adventure. I wanted to see a bit of life!" Robert replied.

"What the hell's takin' you to Glasgow, then!"

"This was the only boat I could get on to without bein' seen!"

"Oh, aye! Were you ever in Glasgow afore?"

"I told you I was never out of Ireland 'til the night!"

"So you did!" Boak said. "Have you any notion of what you'll do when you get there?"

"I have not! Except mebbe get a job on a boat goin' roun' the worl' or somethin'! There's a lot of boats goes to places from Glasgow, isn't there?"

"Aha!" said Boak. "I believe they do, but I never had no fancy for that sort of a life myself!"

"You'd rather be doin' this!"

"Aye, I would."

Robert turned away. He felt no fear of Boak now. "Well, we all have our taste," he said, "an' God knows you seem to have yours!" He did not speak for a while, but when he remembered that Boak had boasted of having done the trip many times before, he turned to him again and said, "How'll I get off without any one seein' me?"

"Easy enough! They lift the tickets about now, an' all you have to do in the mornin' is to mingle in the crowd an' walk off!" Boak answered.

"But won't they be able to tell——?"

"Not at all! They'll be too busy berthin' the boat to bother their heads about anything else! You just do what I do, an' you'll be all right! What's your name?"

Robert told him. "Well, take my tip now an' lie down an' get a sleep. You'll be glad of it before the mornin' comes! Have you anythin' to rest your head on?"

"No!"

"Well, take this, then!"

He pushed something which seemed to collapse like a concertina across to Robert, who felt it and said, "What is it?"

"A life-belt," Boak replied. "Damned oncomfortable to lie on, but better nor nothin'!"

"Did you say you did this for fun!" Robert said, placing the life-belt under his head.

"I did!"

"You've a quare notion of fun," said Robert.

In the morning, Boak awakened him. "It's all right!" he said. "I've been up an' had a look roun'. There's a good wheen o' passengers aboard, an' we'll get off as easy as wink. You can come up on deck if you like!"

"Are we near in?" Robert asked, yawning heavily.

"We'll be in Glasgow in about a couple of hours. We're well up the Clyde now!"

Robert sat up. A faded sort of daylight dripped into his hiding-place. He felt sore and sleepy and slightly sick. His mouth had an unpleasant taste in it. "I'd give the world for a drop of tea!" he exclaimed.

"I'll get you a drop," Boak said. "Come on out now! There's a fella aboard makin' tay in the steerage an' he'll give you a drop. You'll have to drink it black."

"I'll drink it any way!"

"An' when you've had it, come up on top an' I'll show you the Clyde!"

Robert crawled out of his hiding-place and followed Boak into the steerage where a Scotsman was boiling tea in a tin can. "D'ye think you could spare a drop for this chap?" Boak said to the Scotsman, who murmured, "Oh, aye," and poured out a cupful of the hot, black, sugarless tea. Robert greedily swallowed it although it burnt his throat. "Would you like a drop more?" the Scotsman asked.

"Thank you!" said Robert, holding the cup out to be filled.

"Tay puts heart intil you," Boak said.

He held up the cup as if it were a glass containing wine. "It's the national drink of Irelan'!" he said. "Many's a time when I was coul' an' wet an' sick an' sore, I just put the kettle on the coals an' boiled myself a cup o' tay, an' in a wee while I felt as right as rain! Man, dear, but God was in the quare good form the day He made tay!" He drank his tea almost at a single draught and seemed not to be affected by its hotness. "Come up on top," he said to Robert, "an' take a look at the country roun' the Clyde! It's a great place!"

Robert held back. "But is it safe?" he said.

"Safe enough," was the answer. "Anything's safe if you're not afeard of it! I foun' out long ago that the fella that's always safeguardin' himself is the one that gets intil all the trouble! If you look as if you had a right to be where you are, people'll think you *have* a right!"

"Mebbe he's not such a daftie as I thought," Robert said to himself as he followed Boak up to the deck.

"Just mingle with the crowd an' don't draw attention to yourself," Boak whispered, as they reached the top of the steerage stairs. "It's a misty mornin' an' you'll never be noticed!"

Gray clouds cast gray reflections on a gray sea, and a cold wind, that seemed to be as gray as the sea and the sky, blew bleakly across the Clyde from the Mull of Kintyre. Behind him, almost hidden by mist, was the island of Arran, and in front of him was narrowing water with wet-looking hills on one side and sombre fields on the other. He shivered as the wind blew about him.

"You should 'a' brought a big coat wi' you," said Boak.

"I didn't think of it," Robert replied. "Where are we?"

"Them's the Highlands startin' over there," Boak answered. "Man, boy, but you should see them hills on a clear day, wi' the sun shinin' on them. Gran', that's what they are! Many's a time I've stud here of a summer mornin' an' lukked at them. D'ye mind that wee bit in the Bible, how does it go now? Oh, aye! It comes in Isaiah!" He raised his head and almost shouted the verse. "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands." He turned to Robert when he had finished and said, "An' I declare to my God there's been times when I saw them doin' it!" He was silent for a few moments while he looked about him. The flat coast of Ayr was rising up to low headlands, and the deeply-indented shores of

Argyle rose swiftly up to the mist-drenched mountains. White gleams of sunshine shot across the smoky-gray clouds and tried to burn up the mist, but they were not warm enough, and they wavered weakly on the sea. Steamships and sailing-boats drifted up and down the Clyde, and now, as the land closed in, Robert could see signs of human life. He was terribly cold and terribly hungry. He had had nothing to eat since Brenda had given him the cupped eggs and toast, and when he thought of buying food, he felt frightened, for he remembered how little money he had. But what was the use of making a poor mouth of himself? Plenty of people had started off with no money at all! . . . His reflections were interrupted by the voice of Boak, and he turned to listen to his companion. Boak was older than he had first imagined him to be. His face was thin and deeply lined, and his untidy, straggling hair was patched with gray. The wind had stung his eyes and reddened them and made them water, but there was light left in them, and it made them glisten. "When I see them hills," he was saying, "standin' there in the sun, an' all the colours of the rainbow shinin' on them, an' I feel the spray blowin' off the sea and wettin' my face, I feel quarely satisfied for all the sorrow an' discomfort of this world!"

He began to hum under his breath.

"Wheesht!" said Robert, fearful lest attention should be drawn to them.

"Wheesht what?" Boak demanded.

"Quit singin', man! Somebody'll hear you!"

"What odds if they do!" And he began to sing aloud:—

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice."

"Listen!" said Robert, taking hold of his arm. "It's a quare thing that a man so religious as yourself should take trips on boats without payin' your fare!"

Boak ceased to sing. "It is quare," he said, "but I daresay God'll forgive me on the Judgment Day when He sees the way I appreciated His worl'!" He resumed his singing without a pause:—

"Know that the Lord is God indeed,
Without our aid He did us make,
We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take."

"Well, if it's a meetin' you're going to hold, I'll go down below again," said Robert.

Boak seized him by the arm. "Wait! Wait, man!" he said. "Wait 'til you come roun' that corner there!" He pointed to where the Clyde sharply bent to the east and turned round the corner of Renfrewshire. "Wait 'til you see the grandeur of God starin' you in the face, and then mebbe you'll want til sing, too!"

The ship turned the corner and moved past Greenock and Gourock. "Look there!" Boak exclaimed, pointing over the river to where Loch Long and Gareloch ran up into the highlands of Dumbarton. "Isn't it wonderful to see them all spreadin' our fornenst you like that, wee hills an' big hills an' deep water." A religious fervour seemed to possess him, and he walked to the side of the ship, dragging Robert with him, and while he gazed on the beautiful country that lay before them,

he began to chant: "I will lift mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help! . . ."

Suddenly he broke off. The light died out of his dimmed eyes, and fear came in its place. He shut his eyes and began to pray. "Oh, Almighty an' everlastin' God!" he said in a quavering voice, "whatever I do against You, an' whatever You do to me, don't putt me where I'll never see Your hills and mountains no more. For Jesus Christ, His sake, Amen!"

He relaxed his hold on Robert's arm, and stood with his hands on the rail. "Wonderful God!" he murmured aloud. "Wonderful! You done well, God, You done well!"

Robert looked anxiously around. Two sailors were standing a little way off, regarding them with curiosity, and he feared that they knew that he and Boak were stowaways and would presently arrest them. He moved away, leaving Boak to contemplate the hills. One of the sailors followed him, and so, feeling that it was useless to try to evade him, Robert stopped and waited.

"Was Boak botherin' you?" the sailor said.

"No! Oh, no!" Robert replied, made more nervous on hearing Boak's name mentioned.

"Don't let him upset you! He's a harmless fella! Mad! Stark, starin' mad!"

"D'you know him, then?" said Robert.

"Know him! As well as I know myself. He's travelled this trip a score o' times an' more, an' he thinks nobody knows he's a stowaway, but we know right enough! The poor fella's astray in the head. Was he talkin' to you about mountains?" Robert nodded his head. "I thought so. He has mountains on the brain! Don't let him bother you!"

Robert realised that although Boak was known to be a stowaway, he was not. "Thank you," he said, going down the stairs to the steerage, "I won't."

II

When the ship berthed at Jamaica Bridge in Broomielaw, Robert edged himself well into the crowd and hurried as quickly as he could across the gangway. Boak was close to him, and seemed to wish to stay near to him, but Robert did not desire to spend any more time in his company, and so he eluded him on the quay. His recollections of the imbecile brothers of the Short Strand were too recent and miserable for him to be willing to associate with another daftie, although Boak's ecstacy over mountains queerly attracted him. He walked away from the quay with no notion in his head of what he should do. If this was Glasgow, then he could see no point in leaving Belfast. Dreary, dribbling streets of high houses, bare as barracks, strained away from the river, and hordes of dishevelled children, all with noses in need of attention, squalled about the wet pavements. The painted fronts of the gaunt, flat-faced tenements were peeling, and pieces of sodden paper stuck to the doorsteps. He stood for a few moments in a doorway to shelter from the rain which fell dirtily down through sheets of smoke, and glanced about him. On the opposite side of the street was an eating-house that had a look of steamy comfort, and he ran across to it and sat down at a marble-topped table which was still damp from the careless wiping it had received from a big, red-faced, thick-wristed girl who was slopping a wet cloth along the counter. The

shop smelt of stale air and hot fat and innumerable meals, and everything that he touched was slimily wet. The slattern behind the counter had not washed away the grease on the tables, but had merely dribbled water over it and wiped some of the water away. The sticky débris of many meals seemed to be mingled with the sawdust on the floor, and Robert, fresh from the sea, felt himself turning sick in the fœtid atmosphere. He rose from the form on which he had seated himself, but before he could turn towards the street-door, the girl called to him, in a thick voice, "Did ye want your breakfast?"

"Are you Irish?" he said.

"Me father an' mother are Irish," she replied. "I'm Scotch!"

She came from behind the counter as she spoke, and stood beside the table at which he had again seated himself. "What'll I get you?" she said.

He had not the courage to tell her that all he now wanted was to get out of the stinking shop, and so he ordered tea—"as hot as you can make it"—and bacon and eggs, and ate them as quickly as he could.

"Are you Scotch?" she said, as he paid for the meal.

"No," he replied, "I'm Irish!"

"Irish, are you? You talk like a Scotchman!"

"I come from Belfast! . . ."

"Ah, the Black North," she interrupted. "My father and mother come from Cork!"

"I daresay," said he, picking up his change, "but I come from the civilised part of Ireland!"

He left the shop before she had time to speak her mind to him and hurried through the rain in the hope that soon he would come to the centre of the city. He

was nearer to it than he realised, and presently he found himself outside a public library. The rain still fell, and, overcoatless as he was, he feared that his clothes would soon be sodden. He could shelter in the library, and, perhaps, find information about work in the newspapers. He must quickly get employment. He might have to wait a long time before he got a job on a ship, and work of some sort to keep him alive until that time was needed. He had no clothes but those in which he stood up, and he could not go to sea without a kit. . . . There was a group of men standing in front of each of the newspapers on the stands, and when at last he succeeded in getting near enough to the *Glasgow Herald* to be able to read the "Wanted" advertisements, he found nothing among them that was likely to suit him. He wandered into the magazine room, and sat down at a table covered with reviews, and turned over the pages of *The Nineteenth Century*. He must think and think hard. So far his adventure had been a poor, profitless thing. He was wet and cold and presently he would be hungry again. . . . Food suddenly became a menace to him. The regularity with which it was needed now seemed to be a calamity. If a man could do without meals! . . . He had better be careful with his money. Hitherto he had bought a meal for himself immediately he felt in need of one, but that sort of conduct would not do at all. He must make each meal last longer. Perhaps he could skip a meal. If he were to go without his dinner to-day and eat a good tea! . . . Starvation had no attraction for him. Adventurous men often had to go without food, sometimes for days, and their bodies might be reduced to skin and bone, but he had never

heard or read that they *liked* starvation. And there was the question of lodgings. He would have to sleep somewhere that night. But where! The money he had would not keep him in food for long; it would soon be spent if he had to pay for a bed as well. He must get work! If only there were a ship waiting for him! He walked to one of the windows of the library and looked into the street. The rain had ceased to fall, though the pavements were still very wet. If he were to walk about the streets for a while, he might find something to do—anything—even if it were only to carry a bag or push a barrow! . . . His pride was terribly wounded when he thought of himself carrying a bag, but his urgent need to earn money made him ignore the wound. There was a railway station somewhere near the library; he remembered to have seen it as he ran through the rain. He might pick up a few pence there and hear of a place in which to stay for the night! He left the library and asked a man in the street where the station was. "What station do you want?" the man replied.

"The nearest one!" Robert said.

"Then Central's the nearest, but St. Enoch's isn't far off! Where do you want to go?"

"I don't want to go anywhere. I thought mebbe I'd get a job or two! . . ."

"Oh, you're out of work! Well, I'm sorry for you. The Central's just round the street here. I daresay you'll do better there than anywhere, though there's not many people in this city needs to have their bags carried. They generally carry them themselves!" The man hesitated for a moment. "Mebbe," he continued, "you'd let me lend you a shilling! . . ."

He offered the coin to Robert as if he were afraid it might be refused. "Oh, thank you, sir," Robert said, taking it from him. "But I've done nothin' for you!"

"Och, well, mebbe you will some day, and if you don't do anything for me, well, perhaps, you'll be able to do it for somebody else. You look a very well-reared young fellow! I'm wonderin' what's brought you to this!" Robert didn't reply. "Have you run away?" the man asked. Robert nodded his head. "Well, take my advice, and run home again!" said the man. "Good-day to you!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Robert.

III

He became tired of hanging about the Central Station when after three hours of hard competition with other would-be bag-carriers, he found he had earned twopence, and so he wandered aimlessly off. He had eaten nothing since his early morning breakfast, and although he felt very hungry, he was resolved that he would not eat until late in the evening. By walking about the city he could keep his mind off his hunger! . . . These streets were full of people, but he knew none of them. There was no one person in the great, dripping city from whom he could claim friendship. He was terribly alone in all this company of people. Even the man who had so suddenly and unexpectedly given him a shilling was only a kindly memory of a kindly stranger. At home, now, he could scarcely walk through the streets without meeting some one with whom he was acquainted or familiar. But he had left

all that friendliness and was now committed to wandering and solitude for the rest of his life—for he could not go home again. He could not return to his family and confess himself a failure, disheartened by homesickness! . . . Oh, God, how homesick he was! His thought continually recurred to familiar things, little, common, dull things that were not worth a thought, but now seemed extraordinarily interesting and important: the smell of the wind blowing up the Lagan from the Lough or across the city from the hills; the gleam of lamplight through a blue blind; the sound of an Ulster voice; the way in which his mother's face would suddenly relent and a fragrant smile would replace the severity of her look; Mattie's pretty face and Margaret's quick, running laugh; Alec's silly, dribbling, unbalanced moustache! . . . If Alec were to appear before him now, he could almost find it in his heart to hug him. It was queer that Alec and he never got on together. Alec always seemed to be jealous of him, kept on hinting about favouritism! . . . Perhaps Alec *was* jealous of him. That would account for much in their lives! . . . Well, he would have no cause now for jealousy. He would be the only man at home in the future, and there would be no Robert with whom to share his mother's love! . . . That dismal thought made his eyes fill with tears, and he stopped and leant on the parapet of a bridge over which he was crossing until the blur had faded from them. This, he supposed, was the Clyde! Well, give him the Lagan any day! He stood, with his arms on the bridge and stared down on the muddy water beneath him. It was not any muddier-looking than the Lagan, really, only . . . !

"Och, to hell!" he said, aloud, turning away from

the parapet and walking towards the south side of the river, "what's the good of broodin' like this! I've run away, an' that's all about it! If a fella runs away from home he should run away an' not stan' about the streets frettin' an' makin' a poor mouth of himself. I'll think no more about things! I'll try an' get aboard a boat an' go roun' the world or somewhere——!"

He hurried across the bridge and presently found himself wandering through still drearier streets than those in which he had wandered during the early part of the day. "Be rights," he suddenly said to himself, "I ought to send a postcard home to say I'm safe an' soun'—just to keep them from frettin' about me!" But that might be taken in the wrong way, as a sign of weakness, a signal of distress. No, he would not send a postcard, not yet anyway! . . . He turned a corner, and found himself in a street which ran across a tract of black, barren-looking land. There were no houses at this end of the street, but on one side of it was a broken paling through which he caught sight of some factories and a wide tract of earth, pitted with deep holes or heaped with factory rubbish. There was an open gateway in the middle of the paling, and he stood in it for a while and surveyed the dismal scene. A brick-kiln stood on the left of the gate, and as he looked at it he saw labourers wheeling bricks from doorways in the kiln. In front of him were deep pits where men were filling barrows with clay. Heaped above these pits were great piles of slag thrown there from the furnaces of the workshops that stretched away on his right as far as he could see. He picked his way across the slippery ground, full of puddles, and stood on the edge of one of the clay-pits; a great, wide,

deep hole, with slime and stagnant green water at its bottom, and a long slide of white dust and slag spilling down one side of it like a running sore. Here and there in the heap were odd-shaped pieces of slag, some of them still whole, some of them broken, that seemed to have been taken from a mould. Robert stared down at the green puddle at the bottom of the pit and then up at the dark gray sky, growing grayer and darker, and felt the damp, cold wind blowing into his bones. Hell must be like this! Perhaps the damned spent eternity filling barrows in a hole like that! . . . It seemed impossible that the earth could ever be made to look so foul. He remembered the dewy fields outside Belfast through which he had walked barefooted —when? Only two mornings ago! And the Giant's Ring and the Bog Meadows spreading greenly to the mountains! This obscene place must once have been like them. He stared about him, as if he were stunned by all the ugliness he saw. At one edge of the defiled ground he saw a row of tall houses that looked across this dreadful place to the brick-kilns and the workshops and the furnaces. Out of those windows, people gazed upon this desolation! . . . He walked towards the brick-kiln, and stood at one of the entrances and watched the men wheeling the dried bricks into the open. The hot air flowing from the kiln warmed him.

"Would I be let in there?" he said to one of the workmen.

"Go in if you want to," the man replied. "There's two others in there now!"

"Two others?"

"Aye, a couple like yourself, I suppose, out of work an' down on their luck! Go in and warm yourself!"

Robert entered the warm kiln, and stood in the centre of it. There were two elderly men sitting on a bench at the side of it, one of whom seemed to have innumerable pieces of paper on his knees.

"Sit down there, if you want a rest," said the workman. "Nobody'll disturb you while we're workin' here!"

Robert did not speak, but sat down on the bench beside one of the tramps. He was so tired! . . .

The tramp with the pieces of paper did not speak to him. He folded and unfolded and folded again his pieces of brown paper and newspaper, as if they were extraordinarily precious to him. He seemed to be unaware of the workmen or the other tramp. Occasionally he muttered words to himself that sounded meaningless to Robert. One phrase he repeated several times. "Goin's-on," he said, "everywhere!" Robert leant back against the wall, and as he did so caught the eye of the second tramp who touched his head and then pointed at the tramp with the pieces of paper. "Come far, mate?" he said.

"Belfast," Robert replied.

"Ireland, eh! I come from London meself. Been 'ere before?" Robert shook his head. "Not a bad doss, if the cops 'ud leave you alone!"

"Cops!"

"Yus. Can't leave you alone! Come in 'ere sometimes an' shifts the lot of us aht! Can't leave us alone!"

A workman, wheeling a barrow of bricks into the open, overheard his complaint. "Well," he said, "you know why that is. You chaps have no respect for a place, an' it's no' sanitary to let you alone! You'd

hae this place in a fearfu' condeetion if the police didnae shift you frae it. Epideemics, mebbe!"

"Well, 'ow can we 'elp ourselves! There ain't no modern conveniences abaht, are there? I ain't nowticed no plumbin' or sanitary engineerin' any'ow, an' the Scotch ain't so blasted partic'ler neither!"

But the workman had gone without waiting to hear the tramp's reply. Robert, his eyes now accustomed to the gloomy light in the kiln, gazed about him. Piles of bricks were all about him, some no more than blocks of wet, shaped, dark-brown clay, some newly baked into bricks, others quite hard. The ground was covered with a thick brown powder, where the clay had dried into dust. A gentle draught of warm air permeated the kiln, flowing from chamber to chamber, and Robert felt himself soothed by it. His head relaxed, his eyes closed. In a few moments he was asleep.

IV

He felt himself being violently shaken, and he started up shouting, "What is it, Alec?" Then he remembered that he was not at home, asleep in the attic with his brother, but a runaway asleep in a brick-kiln in the company of tramps. An unfriendly voice was ordering him to get up and get out, and a jet of light was streaming into his eyes. He looked up and saw a policeman bending over him. "Come on," he was saying, "you can't sleep here!" He stood up, half stupid with sleep and fatigue and blinked his eyes. The tramps had gone, and the policeman was impatient for Robert to be gone, too. "Out you get," he said, "an' if I catch you in here again to-night, I'll arrest you!" Robert did

not answer, but walked towards the entrance to the kiln. As he came out of the kiln, the cold air sent shivers through his body. He felt chilled to the spine.

"It's terrible cold!" he said to the policeman, who was at his heels.

The policeman glanced at him sharply. "You seem a decent lad," he said. "What brought you to this?"

"Want!" Robert abruptly replied.

"Want!" the policeman repeated. "Have you no home or friends?"

"Not now!"

"Well, it's no business of mine, but I don't like to see a lad like you sleepin' wi' tramps in a brick-kiln——"

"Can't I stop here 'til the mornin'!" Robert pleaded.

"I'm sorry. You can't. The people that owns the place has had to complain about tramps sleepin' here. They've no respect for it——"

Robert nodded his head. "I know," he said. "I heard about it. What's the time?"

"Nearly ten o'clock!" the policeman replied.

Ten o'clock! He must have been asleep for hours! And without food! He had had nothing to eat since breakfast time and he felt as if he were empty.

"Well!" the policeman said loudly.

"All right, constable, I'm goin'!"

"Sorry, boy, but you've got to suffer for the others!"

Robert stumbled out of the kiln, shivering with the cold, and walked towards the broken gateway through which he had entered earlier in the evening. As he passed the corner of the kiln, he heard himself called.

"Hist!" the voice said. "Hist, hist! Is the cop still there?"

"Yes," Robert answered, recognising the voice of the tramp who had spoken to him in the kiln.

"Blast 'im!"

Robert went on towards the gate.

"W'ere you goin'?" the tramp said.

"I don't know," Robert answered.

"Wait a minute!"

He stopped and turned and waited until the tramp came up to him. "No good goin' back there!" he said. " 'E'll run you in the clink if 'e catches you there again! Better come along o' me!"

"Where?"

"Over 'ere!" He jerked his thumb towards the slag-heaps behind him. Robert looked across the dark space where he had seen the clay-pits.

"There?" he said.

"Yus! Git a bit of a warm, any'ow! Better'n nothink any'ow! Come on!"

He moved into the darkness, and Robert followed him. "Be careful 'ow you tread," the tramp said. "This blasted 'eath is full of 'oles, an' you might fall a nell of a long way into a stinkin' puddle an' get drahned! Keep close to me, an' you'll be all right!"

"Where are we goin'?" Robert asked.

"Up one of these blasted slag-'eaps," was the answer he received. "Mind 'ow you step!"

They were walking on the edge of the deep pit from which he had seen the workmen drawing the clay, and presently they reached the first of the great hills of ashes and white dust that had risen up from the waste-land, made out of masses of hot slag, drawn from the iron-works and dumped here. Robert remembered that

he had seen the big "pugs" of slag, some of them still red from the furnaces and weighing several tons, tipped out of the trucks on to the heap. One of them had rolled down the side of the hill into the slimy green water at the bottom, where the rains had collected and made a foul lake, and had been submerged under the steam and bubbles. He had thought to himself then how deep that dark green pool must be, and now he shuddered with fear lest he, too, might go tumbling down into its depths. Even in the darkness he could see the "pugs" standing lop-sidedly on the slag-heaps like old tombstones in a neglected graveyard, and he thought to himself that this place might be a cemetery in hell, in which the utterly damned were buried. There was a "pug" above him which seemed to be so lightly poised that a touch might send it reeling down to the pool. The tramp was toiling towards it. Robert paused to straighten himself. The air was full of rain and sleet that drenched him to the skin, and a bitter wind pierced his dripping clothes and cut his flesh. Great red and orange flames flared from the chimneys of the iron-works and made a brief and flickering illumination on the slag-heaps and the clay-pits and the white "pugs" and the green pool and the mud and puddles of the waste-land, but there was no other light, for heavy, black clouds scudded across the sky and concealed the moon.

"Well, it's no good grum'lin'!" he said to himself. "I asked for it, an' I've got it!"

He followed after the tramp, stumbling now and then in holes in the ground and once his foot went into a puddle of rancid water that had somehow failed to find its way down to the pool. There seemed to be

no one but the tramp and himself alive in this dank world of clay and ashes, and for a melancholy moment he imagined that mankind had perished, that the earth had been consumed, that presently he and the tramp would turn to a heap of white dust and cinders and drift down to the pool and be buried in green slime! . . . His thoughts were suddenly dispelled when his foot caught in something soft that was half-covered with the warm white dust and he fell forward on his hands and face, scraping them on cinders. A horrible fear filled him as he fell, for he had felt the soft thing yield as he trod on it, and he wanted to get up and run away even if he fell into the pool in his flight. But his fear left him when he heard himself cursed and reviled and he turned and saw that a tousled head was emerging from a heap of rags with which its owner had covered himself after he had dug into the warm ash. Presently other heads were lifted, and Robert saw that he was surrounded by men who had nearly buried themselves in the slag. As they sat up in the white ash and let the rain dribble in dirty streaks down their dusty cheeks, it seemed to Robert that the grave was giving up its dreadful dead. On some horrible battlefield corrupting men must lie about in heaps as these men lay on that hill of slag. The rain and sleet still fell and the bitter wind still blew, but he no longer felt them, for the air was warm and seemed to be getting warmer! . . . Perhaps he had died in his sleep in the brick-kiln and his damned soul was now meandering along the first slopes of hell. Those red and orange flames that splashed across the black sky and turned the green pool to a copper colour came from infernal fires. He was dead and damned! . . .

The tramp's voice called to him again. "Over 'ere," it said. "A bit of all right, it is!"

He glanced fearfully about him and saw that the men he had disturbed were wriggling back into the holes they had made for themselves. "Like rats!" he thought. In a few moments they were still again, and the darkness covered them; he could scarcely see them, so closely had they assimilated themselves to the slag, and he wondered, in his weakness, for he felt faint with hunger, whether he had imagined their presence. Phantoms! Phantoms that crept out of the ground and cursed horribly and crept back again! . . .

" 'Ere, cahm on!" the tramp called to him in a fretful voice. "Blimey, you down't 'alf tike a time!"

"Where are you?" Robert replied.

" 'Ere!"

He could see the figure of the tramp further up the slag-heap close to a great perilously-poised "pug" from which, as he now realised, the heat came, and he climbed towards him.

"Ain't 'alf 'ot up 'ere!" said the tramp. "This 'pug's' noo! An' as 'ot as 'ell!"

As he came nearer to it he could hear raindrops sizzling on the "pug" and feel its warmth penetrating his wet clothes. The tramp was lying on the ground, close to the "pug," although its heat was scorching, and Robert could see other forms lying underneath it. If it were to topple over! . . .

"Dig yourself in, mate!" said the tramp. "It's soft 'ere an' warm!"

Robert knelt down and scooped a hole for himself and prepared to lie down in it.

"Tike your coat orf!" the tramp advised, "an' put

it over your 'ead. You'll be all right, then! Warm as toce!"

"Warm as what?" said Robert.

"Toce! You know! 'Ot buttered toce!"

The tramp lay down and prepared to cover his own head. "This ain't the best kip I been in," he said, "but it ain't the worst! You down't get bit by nothink any'ow—except per'aps a rat or two. I did 'ear once about a chap that 'ad his fice 'alf ate orf by rats——!"

Robert hurriedly pulled his coat over his head and mercifully heard no more.

He lay in the warm dust unable to sleep. His plight was one that he had never imagined himself likely to be in. Here he was, a Dunwoody, lying on a hill with tramps and hooligans, soaked to the skin, hungry, chivvied by the police! His descent to this misery had been unaccountably swift. He had dropped in a few hours from a comfortable home and abundant food and a sufficiency of money to a hole in a slag-heap and the company of the lowest of the low! . . . He suddenly sat up and listened. It seemed to him that some one had moved, but although he strained hard to hear no sound reached him. He had imagined it. Queer that he should be so nervous. The least thing seemed to upset him. And he could not sleep! His mind was crammed full of thoughts, jumping about and tormenting him. He put out his hand to feel if rain were still falling. Only a few light drops fell on it. Well, thank goodness, the wet was over. Perhaps in this warm dust his clothes would dry. If he were to move nearer to the "pug," the heat would soon dry them! . . . He stood up and gazed about him. The moon was struggling to break her way through the thick

clouds that ran so swiftly past her that she could make no impression on them, but now and then they paused in their flight and allowed her to look through the gap in their ranks. In such a moment he saw the whole of the waste-land spreading before him and softened and made gentle by the moonlight. Down there, far, far down, it seemed, lay the green lake, dark and deep. When the moon's beams shone on it, it seemed to be kindly, but when the moon was withdrawn behind clouds and only the red and orange flames from the iron-foundry shone on it, it seemed terribly evil. The moon made it look like smooth grass; the foundry-fires made it look like a great glistening baleful eye! . . . He turned quickly. Something had cracked. Distinctly he had heard the sound of cracking. He did not hear it again, although he listened for what seemed a long while, and presently he lay down in the warm, white dust and tried to sleep. His eyes were closed and his thoughts were quiet—in a few moments he would be asleep—when again he heard the sound of cracking, much louder this time than before, and then, before he could sit up, there was a terrific noise as if the earth had exploded, and a piece of stone fell on him and cut one of his hands. He heard a loud scream and the sound of something falling. . . . He sprang up from the ground in time to see the "pug" rolling down the slag-heap to the green pool, and as he looked, the moon shone for a moment through the clouds, and he saw that something was rolling with it! . . . The moon was hidden again and only the red and orange flames were left for light! He heard a great splash and saw the green surface of the pool break and turn

black like an enormous mouth opening. Then the mouth slowly closed, and the pool became green again.

V

The sound of the explosion had sent the sleeping men leaping from their beds, and they stood about the place where the "pug" had been, terror-stricken. The rain had ceased, and the moon's long struggle with the clouds had ended in victory for her. The whole of the slag-heap was lit with her pale light, and the frightened men could be plainly seen cowering together, their long shadows stretching down the white dust. Robert could hear a white-faced, terrified man, repeating the same words over and over. "Whit'll I dae! Whit'll I dae!" He could feel his lips trembling as he walked towards the group. "What's happened?" he said to the man nearest to him.

"Says his mate's down there!" was the reply.

"Down there?"

"Aye! He was underneath it when it burst, an' it rolled him down——!"

Robert grabbed hold of the man's arm. "Do you mean to say there's a man drownin' down there?" he cried.

"Droonin'!" another man answered. "Drooned, you mean. If he wisna deed afore he wis drooned. He'll be deep in mud the noo, wi' tons o' 'pug' on top o' him for a tombstone!"

"Can't we do something?" Robert asked.

"Dae somethin'? Whit can we dae? The man's deed, an' buried deep doon there. Whit can we dae?"

"An' not the first yin eether!" said another voice.

"Nor the last!" said another.

Robert turned away, feeling sick. He struggled up to the top of the slag-heap and sat down. He could see dark figures standing together and hear the sound of their voices as they argued about the explosion. The tramp who had guided him here was asserting in his shrill Cockney voice that there ought to be "compensytion" for the death of the man who had been drowned. "Somebody ought to p'y damages for this—'eavy damages!" His voice drifted across the slag-heap, oddly irritating to hear. Him and his compensation! At the foot of the slag-heap, Robert could discern the drowned man's mate, distractedly peering into the pool. Now and then he poked a stick into the green water! . . .

There was a warm "pug" lying near him, and Robert rose and moved closer to it, so that its heat might dry his clothes. The men below him, tired of the Cockney tramp's eloquence, were separating. A few of them lit a fire under a "pug" and crowded round it for the rest of the night, but the majority of them crept back into the holes in which they had been sleeping when the "pug" exploded. Quietness began to settle upon them. A faint murmur that grew fainter and presently ceased came from the men gathered round the red glow of their fire. The drowned man's mate still peered into the pool! . . . The sky lightened and the clouds broke into long strips that slowly changed colour. Behind the black bars of cloud, he could see cold silver and pale lemon light that grew warm and warmer until the black bars of cloud turned orange and then red and, finally, the sun stripped the darkness from

the sky and filled the heaven with bright light and made the black sky blue and turned the thick masses of cloud into balls of white smoke. He could hear sleepy birds twittering and then, their eyes wide open, he could hear them boldly singing. He could see the sleeping tramps now quite plainly, lying in their scooped beds. The men who had lit the fire under the "pug," were prone on the ground, asleep. At the foot of the slag-heap, he could see another form, the drowned man's mate, huddled and asleep on the verge of the green pool! . . . And now the world began to awake. Workmen appeared in the distance hurrying to their jobs, and he could see signs of commencing labour in the clay-pits. He put out his hand and touched a tuft of blackened grass striving to grow on the slag. It was wet with dew. Little spangled drops of dew gleamed on the dark grass like shining crystals! . . . He got up and stretched himself, and walked down the slag-heap and returned to the town. He seemed suddenly to himself to be a grown man.

VI

He had already earned two shillings and a meal when he met the sailor, heavy with drink and "dunnage," and the sailor, in a fit of drunken generosity, had given him another shilling for helping him aboard the four-masted barque, *Ardrossan Castle,* lying out in the river. "Whash you wanna be a sailor for?" he muttered, when he heard Robert asking how he, too, might go to sea. "Nobody but a born idjit would go to sea!"

"Well, how do you go anyway?" Robert persisted.

"Ever been before?"

"No."

"Well, don't go now. Thash my advice——!"

"I want to go. There's nothin' else I want to do!"

"Well, go as a pass—pass—— Well, go as a passhager, then. Thash only shenshabble way to go to sea! Here, just help me to stow this stuff——!"

They were in the forecastle, an ill-lit, congested place, and the sailor was trying to put his dunnage away and at the same time cope with his "donkey's breakfast," or straw-stuffed mattress. "Fanshy wantin' to be a sailor!" he said more to himself than to Robert. "Whash the marrer with the jails, eh, whash the marrer with 'em that you wanna go she—sea——" He suddenly dropped the mattress and turned to Robert. "Ever heard of Dr. Johnson?" he demanded. Robert shook his head. "Ah! Ah!" the sailor said, wagging his finger wisely. "Very clever man, he was, very clever man. He said nobody should go to she—sea, I mean, that could get into jail! Thash what he said, an' he was qui' ri'! Qui' ri' he was! You take my tip, boy, you go to jail! Far better for you!"

"You're drunk!" said Robert.

"I know that! I know I'm drunk. Why shouldn't I be drunk! I' ave a ri' to be drunk, 'aven't I? . . ."

Robert left him, and returned to the deck. A man was standing at the side of the ship looking down on the Clyde.

"Excuse me, sir!" said Robert.

The man spat into the river and then turned and looked at Robert without speaking.

"Do you want a man!" said Robert.

"Man! What age are you?"

"Twenty-one," Robert boldly replied.

"You're young-looking for your age! Have you ever been on a boat before?"

"No, sir!"

"I shouldn't think so, either! Twenty-one are you?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Will you take your oath on that!"

"I will," said Robert.

The man paused for a few moments, and then said, "Where's your family live!"

"I have no family," Robert replied.

"Well, where did they live when you had one?"

"Belfast, sir! My father was a seafarin' man. He was drowned in the Pacific——!"

"An' you want to be drowned, too, I suppose?"

"He was the master of his ship!" Robert proudly replied.

"Was he? Well, I'm the second mate of this one! Come back in a couple of hours' time an' see the captain!"

"Thank you, sir. Can I stay aboard now!"

"No, you can't! Bring your dunnage with you in case he signs you on. We sail in the mornin'!"

"I haven't any!"

"Have you nothin' but what you've on?"

"No, sir!"

"Oh, well! Your family seems to have left you badly off! You'll need stuff of some sort—sea-boots an' a change of clothes, anyway! You'd better get some!"

"I've no money!"

"My God, boy, you talk as if you'd just arrived in the world! . . . Well, come back in two hours. I'll talk to the captain about you!"

He went ashore, and stood on the quay for a while gazing at the ship on which he hoped to sail. She looked lovely as she sat on the water, with her long, slender lines stretching from her beautiful bow to her heavy stern. "I hope to my God," he said to himself, "I get aboard her!"

Two hours later the mate told him that he could go to the agent's office and sign on as an ordinary seaman. He could draw a month's pay in advance and had better buy himself a pair of sea-boots and overalls. "Get as much as you can," he said, "you'll need it all. This ship's going to Australia! . . ."

THE SECOND PART

OF

THE WAYWARD MAN

Where the remote Bermudas ride
In the ocean's bosom unespied,
From the small boat that row'd along
The listening winds received this song:
"What should we do but sing His praise
That led us through the watery maze
Unto an isle so long unknown
And yet far kinder than our own?
Where lie the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs,
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms' and prelates' rage:
He gave us this eternal Spring
Which here enamels everything,
And sends the fowls to us in care
On daily visits through the air:
He hangs in shades the orange bright
Like golden lamps in a green night,
And does in the pomegranates close
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows:
He makes the figs our mouths to meet
And throws the melons at our feet;
But apples plants of such a price,
No tree could ever bear them twice.
With cedars chosen by His hand
From Lebanon He stores the land;
And makes the hollow seas that roar
Proclaim the ambergris on shore.
He cast (of which we rather boast)
The Gospel's pearl upon our coast,
And in these rocks for us did frame
A temple where to sound His name.
O, let our voice His praise exalt
Till it arrive at Heaven's vault;
Which thence (perhaps) rebounding may
Echo beyond the Mexique bay!"
Thus sung they in the English boat
A holy and a cheerful note:
And all the way, to guide their chime,
With falling oars, they kept the time.

ANDREW MARVELL.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

I

THE tug sounded her syren, and soon afterwards the *Ardrossan Castle* moved down the Clyde to begin her trip to Melbourne. She lay well down in the water, for she was heavily loaded with pig-iron, steel rails, cement, pianos, sewing-machines and lighter cargo. She straightened herself out in the river as the tug slowly pulled her along, and seemed to Robert, as he stood with the rest of the crew on the forecastle-deck, to be the most beautiful ship in the world. He was trembling with excitement. Now, indeed, was he committed to adventure. He was a seaman aboard a boat bound for Australia. The miseries he had endured on the slag-heap remained in his memory merely as events, disagreeable when they were experienced, but romantic to remember. Already he had created an impression by narrating his story to Wadsworth, the sailor, now sober, in whose company he had come aboard the *Ardrossan Castle,* and Wadsworth had insisted that the story should be repeated to the rest of the crew. The story would entertain others; he must not forget any of it! . . . People on shore were shouting and cheering as the ship moved down to wider and deeper water, and Robert, cheering back to them with his comrades, felt as if they were his friends who had come to see him off on his first long voyage. The

dripping clouds of yesterday had vanished and in their place was a high blue heaven that turned the river and the sea almost to the colour of turquoise. The wind was cold, but pleasant, and it sent the water splashing against the ship's sides with a sound like the cracking of a whip. He leant over the lee rail and watched the water dividing at the bow, rising up in clear, shining arches with silvery-white crests, as the ship was drawn down the river. This was an easy time for the crew, but presently, when the tug had cast off and the yards had to be manned and the sails spread! . . . He glanced up at the tall varnished masts and beautifully-spread yards and felt his heart, for a moment, sink as he thought of himself perched high among them in a gale, striving with broken, bleeding fingers, to set sail! . . . But his fear quickly passed. If other men could do it, he also could do it. All of them on board that boat had had to go aloft for the first time once in their lives, and no doubt their hearts sank then as his sank now, and when he looked at some of them, he thought that he could easily do what such poor-looking men had done! . . . Anyhow, whatever he was told to do, he would do. It was unlikely that he would be asked to do anything that could not be done, and if anybody else could do it, he could do it!

The ship came to for a little time at the Tail of the Bank, while the jib-boom was rigged out and some final stores were brought on board, and then she sailed into the Gareloch to have her compasses adjusted. The wind had risen and the clouds had darkened, and the captain, scanning the sky, ordered the tug to tow him into Lamlash Bay where they lay under the Arran hills

for the night; but on the next day, although the gale had not abated, they spread their sails and beat out to the open sea.

"The old man's goin' to chance it!" said Wadsworth to Robert. "An' this is where you'll get it in the neck if you ain't a born sailor. Sick that's what you'll be! Sick as a dog!"

II

But he had not been ill. Marvellously he had found his sea-legs. The ship plunged and rolled in the swirling water, dipping and rising so that she seemed, now to be high above the sea and now about to be submerged in it, and at first, as she rolled over on her side as if she would never recover her balance, he felt that he was about to be sick. But the sensation passed. "I'm a born sailor!" he said to himself. "This is my da in me!" A sweet pride filled him at the thought. He had taken to the sea as if it were his by right. He was a sailor. The novelty of seafaring was strong in him. Everything on the ship interested him. The "old man," Captain Craig, aloof on the poop-deck and famous among the famous captains of clippers, filled him with awe. That small, stern-looking, bearded man could control the sea and the wind and the sky; he could take a ship across deep and wide waters and bring her back again with no more agitation than Alec would display in selling a gallon of paraffin oil; he knew about tides and stars and gales and could cause the sun to tell him just where he was on an empty ocean. Talk about ministers and high-up people like Mr.—Mr.—what was the name of that man his mother was related to! . . . De Lacy, that was the name—

talk about people like that being anybody when there was a man like Captain Craig in the world! Ridiculous! The mates, the crew, the rigging, the masts—wherever he looked, whatever he saw, seemed to be incessantly enthralling. He had watched the crew settling into the ship, lugging out their chests and showing off their shore-going vanities; and had helped a hard-bitten old shellback to decorate the forecastle with pictures torn from magazines. The central place was given to a coloured print of a dancing-girl whose long legs and full thighs were clad in pink tights that might have been her skin. There was a sort of belt round her waist, pink, too, and with a golden fringe on it, and over her breasts were things that looked like shallow bowls! . . . Robert felt ashamed, yet daring, as he held the picture while Masters prepared to tack it to the riding-bitts.

"That must be a desperate woman!" he said, when the picture was tacked up.

"Desperate! What do you mean, desperate!" Masters said.

"Showing her legs like that, I should think she was a bad woman!"

"Bad my granny!" Masters said. "What harm's in showin' a good pair of legs to the world? When you've been in this damned ship for four months without sight or sign of a woman, you'll be grateful for a peep at her!" He tapped the picture with his knuckles as he spoke. "I've been a sailor all my life, an' I tell you this, a man gets hungry for the sight of a woman—just to see an' look at one—when he's been on the water for months an' seen nothin' but men! I always take a picture like that with me whatever ship I go

on. It's a great comfort to a man, a picture like that!"

Robert wondered. He had never thought of women as necessary to men, so necessary that merely to look at one was comforting. His mother, of course—but she was different. Brenda Cairnduff, now, he could scarcely imagine himself "thinking long" about her, though Brenda was a nice-looking girl. She would probably marry Alec. One of these days, a long time hence, he would go home and there he would see Brenda, married to Alec, and the mother of two or three children! . . . He would be their uncle! . . . The reflection diverted his mind to other thoughts, and suddenly he was full of apprehension. When *would* he return to his home? This voyage to Melbourne would take several months; the journey back would take several more; the ship might not immediately return to Glasgow; he might not see home again for years, and in that time his mother might die! . . . The joy that had filled his heart as he felt his feet gripping the deck like a born sailor's feet now fled from it, and when Masters had done decorating the forecastle, Robert crept into his bunk and turned his face to the ship's side. He could hear the murmur of talk from the other men, continual praise of the "last ship I was in" and gloomy prophecies concerning the discomforts and miseries likely to be endured in the *Ardrossan Castle,* and he could see through the porthole the stars rising and falling within its circle as the ship moved through the sea. But it was not of his comrades' talk nor was it of the stars that he was thinking. His mind was full of pictures of his home and one persistent, terrible thought, that he might never

see his mother again. He realised the anxiety she must feel about him, and the thought that she would lie awake at night, wondering where he was, daunted him. He might have sent a postcard to her to tell her that he was safe and sound, but he had not sent one, and now it was too late. He seemed to himself to be cruel, wantonly inflicting pain on her! . . . He would write to her from Melbourne and tell her not to worry about him. But if he were to do that she might have him fetched back to Belfast. He had sworn a lie about his age! . . . He heard five bells struck, and knew that his watch below would soon be ended. He must try to sleep, and so resolving he closed his eyes. But presently, almost without his knowledge, they were open again, and again he was staring at the stars through the porthole. It was useless to try to sleep, so he sat up in his bunk and looked out of the porthole. The sky was full of stars, millions of them. They seemed to him like seeds sown on a big, dark ploughed field. He imagined God striding across the sky, throwing fistfuls of star-dust about the heavens as a sower throws fistfuls of corn. Presently the seed would sprout and the stars would grow and the big dark field of heaven would flourish with flowers and grain and grass! . . . He listened to the cold, swishing noise of the sea, and felt now and then spray flicking his face. The sea never stopped moving. There was no rest on the sea. The tide came in and went out and came in again and went out again. The stars seemed to be still, but he had read somewhere that they too continually moved. Everything in the world moved. But where was everything moving to? Sadness filled him. The sea and the stars and this ship were beautiful

yet they made him feel sorrowful! . . . He heard footsteps descending into the forecastle, and he turned his head and saw the man on the anchor-watch come in and light his pipe. He looked at Robert, and then came and stood by his bunk for a moment.

"Homesick, sonny?" he said.

"Yes," Robert replied.

"Everybody is," he said, "at sea! Better get some sleep if you can. It'll be eight bells soon!"

He went out, and Robert laid himself down again in his bunk. The forecastle was dark, except where red slits of light gleamed through chinks in the stove. He could hear the deep breathing of his sleeping comrades and the incessant beat of the sea, and as he listened his eyes filled with tears. Presently eight bells was struck, and his watch below was ended. He pulled on his boots and went on deck.

III

The second mate had chosen him for the starboard-watch. Including the second and third mates, there were twelve men in the watch, one of whom, Charlie Stephens, became Robert's watch-mate, looking after the binnacles at the beginning of the trip and keeping the time at night in their watch. Stephens was an Etonian—there came a time when Robert felt that of all the boys who had run away from home, he alone had not been educated at Eton—and had led the sort of adventurous life that Robert wished to lead. He had sailed all over the seven seas and said that he knew China better than he knew Windsor. There was very little that any one could tell him about 'Frisco. He

knew a few "joints" in New York, and if his name were mentioned to certain people in Honolulu it would make a profound impression upon them. He had served in an American regiment, but, failing to like it, had deserted and taken to the sea again. What puzzled him, he frequently said, was how he contrived to get to Glasgow. If any one had asked him which was the last place on earth that he, Stephens, was likely to visit, he would have replied, "Glasgow." Yet to Glasgow he had come. Moreover he had been ill in Glasgow. A fever had seized him there, and he was taken to hospital. He had nothing against Glasgow. It seemed to him to be a pretty decent sort of city, but he could not understand how he had managed to get into it! . . . Stephens was a good seaman, plucky, stout-hearted, astonishingly cheerful, and he talked in a comic way that extraordinarily amused Robert, who had started by believing all that Stephens told him, but soon learned to disbelieve most of it. "No," said Stephens, "I don't tell lies; I tell stories!"

"You *are* a liar, Charlie!" Robert insisted.

"I'm a romancer!"

But whatever he was, Stephens was a good comrade and it was he, more than any person, who made a seaman of Robert. He saw that Robert knew nothing at all of ships, and he had set himself to teach him seamanship. They climbed the forecastle-head and began on the flying-jib downhaul, and worked their way aft to the spanker-boom sheet, Stephens naming ropes and gear and explaining their uses, while Robert strove hard to remember them. "Do you see this string?" he said, shaking it so that Robert could see it moving for the whole of its length. "See where it goes to?

Right up to that block on the fore royal stay! See?" He shook the buntline again.

"Yes," said Robert, and then, "What's it called?"

"The fore royal buntline!"

At first, the running gear seemed to Robert to be an untidy mess, and he wondered how any sailor could ever disentangle the ravel of ropes which ran from the rails to the mastheads and yards, but very soon he realised that this tangle was no tangle, but a most severe order. Every rope had a name and a place and a purpose, and no rope must be put out of its place. The safety of the ship depended upon the certainty that a sailor could go to a belaying-pin and find there the rope that should be on it. "A hell of a mess we'd be in if a chap had to go hunting in the dark in a gale for a rope that was one day here and another day over there. So get that fact into your noddle first. Every rope has one place and no other place! Got that!"

"Yes, Charlie!"

"Do you twig anything odd about these ropes?"

Robert thought that everything about them was odd.

"Yes, but do you notice anything in particular about them!"

"No."

"Well, notice this!" He took hold of a rope as he spoke and shook it. "See how high it goes?"

"Yes," Robert replied, following the rope with his eye up to the fore lower rigging.

"And how far aft it runs!" Robert nodded his head. "That's another fact to get into your noddle. The higher a rope leads aloft, the further aft it leads on deck, and the lower down it leads, the further forward. Is that sticking in your skull?"

"It's stuck," said Robert.

In this way, they went more than once through the whole running gear of the ship because, though Robert strove hard to remember all the names, he could not at once do so.

"And if you're going to be any good at this job," Stephens said, "don't hang back when an order's given! Jump to it! It's a sailor's deepest disgrace to be called by name to do a job. Jump to it! And the nastier it is, the quicker you should jump! Do you want to be a sailor, Darkie, or a rope-hauler!"

Here, too, he was called Darkie.

"A sailor," he said.

"Well, never let yourself be named for a job. You wait till we get a smell of the Cape, and you'll soon see who are the sailors on this ship and who are the rope-haulers. That fellow, Jennings, is a bit of a rope-hauler! He can do the job all right if he likes, but he's too darned lazy to try. You watch him in the next rough weather. You won't find him first in the rigging or laying out on the yard-arm; he'll be in the forecastle hunting for his oilskins, if he can sneak away, and he'll hug the bunt, if he can't, as if it were his girl!"

Robert swore to himself that he would always be found as far out on the yard-arm as he could get. No bunt-hugging for him! . . .

It was Charlie who had told him about the stars so that he could identify them. At school, they had been spots in a picture of chalk-marks on a blackboard totally unrelated to the lovely lights that hung from the sky, and so little had his instruction in astronomy interested him that he began to believe that all knowledge of the stars must be dull. What did their names matter anyhow? Who cared how far or how near they

were to the earth? It was enough for him that the heavens were full of stars and that, on a clear frosty night, he could see them split on the sky like primroses in a hedge. If primroses were to be lit up at night, gleaming and glowing in the grass, the hedgerows and meadows would resemble the floor of heaven! . . . Mr. Mineely talked about stars as if he had never seen one. He drew diagrams and said "That's Venus!" or "That's Mars!" and then rubbed the diagram out with a chalky duster. The Milky Way was a thing you drew on a blackboard and then wiped out! . . . Mr. Mineely knew exactly how many miles separated the planet—a word Robert loathed—Venus from the Sun and knew all about its diameter, but once when Robert, walking home with him in the evening, asked him to say which of the stars they saw clustered above their heads was Venus, he hesitated and hummed and ha'ad and finally said, pointing to one, that he thought that that must be it. Robert had had to be content with that information; for nobody that he knew then could tell him any more. But Charlie Stephens not only knew the names of the stars, but could identify them and make them tell him where he was on the sea. He did not know the order of the planets in importance nor how far they were from the sun nor could he even estimate their diameter, but he knew and recognised them and told Robert how to recognise them, too, and in quiet spells in night-watches, Robert and he would stand on the forecastle-head and gaze at the stars casting their trembling reflections on the dark sea. Up there, astern, and in line with the mizzen-truck were the Pointers and west from them and half-way up the horizon was the North Star—the sailors' friend. The whole constellation of heaven seemed to be laid bare

before him, though Charlie's knowledge was elementary, and Robert, for the first time in his life, felt that earth and sea and sky and stars and men were bound together. The Great Bear and the Little Bear and the Pleiades and the Heavenly Twins, the Hyades with Aldebaran, the Bull's Eye, fiercely shining in the middle of them, and Orion and Mars and Sirius, the Dog Star, the brightest in heaven, and the Great Nebula, star-dust carelessly spilt, as if God the sower had suddenly emptied His sackful of stars and the wind had scattered them across the sky. Mr. Mineely's lessons in astronomy now seemed very ridiculous and insufficient to Robert. He stood in silence by Stephen's side, murmuring in his mind the names he had heard recited to him, and was content. Spray flicked his face, and he could taste salt in the wind. The deck heaved slowly under his feet as if the ship were mounting to the stars. How lovely was the world! . . . He heard the second mate, who was pacing the poop-deck, calling to him to take a trick at the wheel, and he went aft and took hold of the spokes and repeated the course. He could feel the rudder kicking, and a queer joy filled his heart, as he put the helm down and watched the main royal slowly lift and fill. The ship had answered and was obedient to him. He was driving her through the sea. A little while ago he was a boy at school, bidden by his mother, but now he was a seaman, taking a turn at the wheel, and making a ship obey him. He raised his eyes to the stars again. There they were, all of them, Aldebaran and Sirius, the Gemini and Orion, star-dust and the Pleiades and the one sure star in heaven, the North Star that would guide a sailor anywhere above the Equator and bring him safely home! . . . He repeated the course to himself again. "Full and by!"

And again he pressed the helm down and saw once more the clew of the main royal lift and fill, and felt the ship move to obey him. And his heart thrilled. He was a sailor.

IV

The Bay of Biscay disappointed Robert. In all the sea-books he had read, the authors insisted on the terrors of that stormy sea. Men who had rounded the Horn many times almost without a tremor were seized with frightful misgiving in the Bay. It was no disgrace to a seaman to be sick in the Bay of Biscay. Captains were queasy on the poop when their ships rolled through that water, and mates became human beings, subject to human weaknesses. While the *Ardrossan Castle* was still in the Irish Sea, a remark made by Robert revealed his apprehension about the Bay, and immediately his mates filled him with terrible tales of its terrors. Walls of water rose up and fell upon you. Sea-gulls became sick when they flew across the Bay. There was no sailor in the world who did not dread it! . . . Robert remembered the song he had been taught in school:—

> At last the wished-for morrow
> Broke through the hazy sky,
> Absorbed in silent sorrow
> Each heaved a bitter sigh.
> The dismal wreck to view
> Struck horror to the crew
> As she lay on that day
> In the Bay of Biscay O!

To be wrecked and to toil through the sea in a small boat with little drinking water and no food would be

an experience worth having, but merely to be ill in the Bay of Biscay! . . . But the Bay had been as flat as a pancake. "I've seen rougher water on the pond in the Ormeau Park!" Robert scornfully exclaimed to Stephens as he gazed at the still sea. "You're lucky, my lad!" Stephens answered. "But one of these days it'll give you a hell of a doing for catching it in this state! Don't you be so cocky! When you've seen a storm in the Bay you'll respect it!"

He began to believe that the perils of the sea were greatly exaggerated. Fair winds and fine weather had followed them so far almost for the whole of their voyage. Their worst weather had been in the Firth of Clyde. One of the men, a "ranik" like himself, but, unlike him, not a born sailor, had been ill off Ailsa Craig, but had sailed through the Bay without a qualm! That seemed to Robert to be a sore disgrace to the Bay. "If the Clyde could upset him," he said to Stephens, "the Bay should 'a' torn the inside out of him!"

"It'll do that all right in its own time," Stephens replied.

It was their watch below, and they went down together to join their mates, some of whom were playing cards, while others were busy with their dunnage or smoking or asleep. Stephens lay down in his bunk while Robert sat on the end of it, and watched the card-players playing casino. Suddenly he turned to Stephens.

"What made you do this?" he said.

"Do what?"

"Come to sea like this?"

Stephens rolled over on his side. "What made *you* do it?" he answered.

"I ran away!" Robert replied.

Stephens nodded his head. "So did I!"

"But that school you went to—that place called Eton——!"

"Nothing to do with it! This is my life and no other sort would suit me! I'm a misfit!"

"What do you mean, a misfit?"

"Born odd! My father was a bishop, and he had an idea that I ought to grow up and be a bishop too. So he sent me to Eton so that I should get a good start in the profession of St. Peter! Then I was to go to Oxford and on to Ely——!"

"Ely——!"

"Yes! Theological college where only better-class clergy go to be trained! There was a nice refined curacy waiting for me in a select parish behind the Brompton Road in London, and I was to get a minor canonry in a cathedral in the west of England just as soon as father could manage it! Oh, I tell you, it was all nicely arranged. My career was to be very successful! You see, Queen Victoria had a great liking for father!"

"Did you know Queen Victoria?" Robert asked.

"Yes, she patted me on the head once, and gave me a prayer-book when I was confirmed. I was disappointed, for I thought she was going to give me five bob. She was an odd little woman, with big blue eyes that stuck out."

Robert was thrilled. Hitherto the Queen had been almost a myth to him, and he could scarcely believe that he was talking to some one whose head had been patted by her.

"What I can't understand," he said, "is why you

are here. You might have gone into the navy and become an admiral."

"I told you," said Stephens, "this is the only sort of life I'm fit for! I've dog-danced about the world for twenty years, wondering why the devil I was doing it, but I've not yet found out! I suppose I hate the sea as much as any sailor hates it——!"

"Hate the sea!" said Robert in astonishment.

"Loathe the damned thing! All seamen do. But that doesn't keep me off it. There's always a ship somewhere waiting for me to sign on. I can't fit in to that life at home. I'd begin to bite and kick if I had to live like that. I tried it once!"

"What did you do?"

"Went into an office in the City of London! My God, I thought I'd go mad! I sat on a stool at a desk and I wrote things in a book until one day I could stand it no longer and I chucked my pen down on the desk and cleared out. I nearly ran all the way to St. Katherine's Docks where I found a ship! . . . And that finished me with that sort of a life!"

"Didn't your father fret after you?"

"He did. I think he died of grief. I brought his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave——!"

"You're makin' fun of me, Charlie!" Robert protested.

"No, I'm not. He never recovered from the blow to his pride. What was the use of him trotting round the cathedral in full canonicals, when his only son was a common seaman, stinking of tar——!"

Robert was shocked. "That's not the way to talk of your father!" he said.

"Isn't it, Darkie?" Stephens replied, smiling at him,

"You didn't know my father! Anyway, I didn't fit in with the sort of life he wanted me to lead, and that's the sad story of my blighted career. The reason I'm here is because there's no other place for me. I'm a misfit!"

Robert leant back and thought for a few moments. "I wonder if I am, too!" he said at last.

"Probably," Stephen said. "And now, young fellow, clear off my bed. I'm going to sleep!"

He rolled over on his side so that Robert could not see his face and presently he was gently snoring. Robert left his bunk and joined the card-players, who had just finished a game. "Was Charlie tellin' you the story of his life?" one called Scotty said to him. Robert nodded his head. "Did he tell you his father was a bishop?"

"Aye, he did!"

"Well, that's true! It's the only bit about himself he'll ever tell you that is true!"

"He says he's a misfit!" Robert continued.

"Wot the 'ell's that?" demanded Ching the Cockney, who was called by that name because he was reputed to be the grandson of a Chinaman.

"What we all are," Scotty answered. "No bloody good to nobody!"

They were tired of card-playing, and they sprawled about the forecastle while Ching the Cockney and Scotty argued.

"That's abaht it," Ching said. "This 'ere bloody seafarin' life's no cop for a poor bloody sailor—'alf-stahved, 'alf-drahned and not 'alf-pyd. When I wos 'ome last trip, my brother-in-law wot keeps a nam-an'-beef shop in Stoke Nooin'ton took me to a smokin'-

concert, an' so 'elp me Gawd, a chap there sung a song about a life on the ocean wyve, a nome on the rollin' deep——"

"I've heard it!" Scotty said.

"I didden know w'ether to laugh or 'it 'im," Ching continued. " 'E was a clerk in a corn-chandler's shop, 'e was, a little feller with fallen-in eyes an' a waxed moustache, that looked as if a row in the Serpentine 'ud mike 'im sick, an' there 'e was chortlin' 'ard abaht a life on the ocean wyve an' a nome on the rolling deep. I 'ad to laugh! Yus, I thought to meself, you'd be singin' a dam' fine toon if you was lyin' aht on a yard-arm in a bleedin' gyle, tryin' to stretch a syle, an' all you'd 'ad for dinner was pea-soup an' fat pork!"

"Or burgoo mebbe!" said Scotty.

"An' your bleedin' clothes wet through, an' you 'alf dead for a sleep! Ow, yus, a life on the ocean wyve an' a nome on the rollin' deep, I don't think! Wot the 'ell are we all 'ere for?"

A book flew past Ching's head, and Charlie's voice was heard complaining. "How can anybody sleep with you tub-thumping all over the place? If you're so fond of the land, why didn't you stay on it?"

"Well, wot the 'ell *are* we 'ere for?" Ching persisted. "Awnswer me that, somebody!" He paused for a few moments, but no one answered. Then he leant back and said, "Naow, an' I can't awnswer neither! We're 'ere because we can't 'elp our damned selves!"

"Misfits was the word I used!" Charlie exclaimed.

"I dessay! You've always got something comic to say abaht everythink! Any'ow, 'ere we are, an 'ere we'll be 'til we're washed overboard or die of yellow-

jack in some God-forsaken 'ole 'undreds of miles from 'ome. If we ain't in this coffin we'll be in another." His mind suddenly diverted from the general misery of a sailor's life to a particular misery. "An' if anybody knows a ship with worse grub than this one, I'd like to 'ear abaht it! Gawd, wot grub!"

Instantly the air was full of foul speech about food; but it all ended in Ching's blasphemous demand to be told where in the world there was a burgoo-jammer to equal the *Ardrossan Castle*. Could any one present tell him of a ship where the pea-soup was waterier and the pork greasier and the burgoo more uneatable than it was on the *Ardrossan Castle?*

"Yes," Charlie interrupted, "I can!"

"Ow, can you! An' wot ship might that be?" Ching said.

"The last ship you were on! And the one before that, and every damned ship you've ever sailed!"

There was laughter then, and the talk became a series of admissions that the food on the ship on which one was serving was always the worst in the world. Robert listened to this talk with a strange sense of depression. Would he, too, come to think of life on the sea as a misery from which there was no escape except by a dismal death?

V

They ran through the north-east trades into the doldrums without incident of any interest, and Robert, now familiar with the ways of the ship, felt that his shipmates complained of the sea with little cause. He felt no boredom or anger when the winds died down or

were so light that the ship seemed to stand still, nor did he grumble at the sudden squalls of rain and the thunderstorms. The men seemed incessantly to be bracing the yards and the "old man" to be incessantly manœuvring for movement of some sort, but to Robert all this trickery with the winds was fascinating. There was no need to call him by name; he was eager to run up the rigging and lie along the yards. The more he learned of sail-setting in these calms and light winds, the better he would be able to work when the gales blew and the sea rose up and beat the ship about. His fear was that he might funk the rigging in a storm and be content to hug the bunt. He could imagine with what scorn Stephens would look at him if he did that. "Call yourself a sailor!" he would say. "Why, you're only a dam' rope-hauler!" Life was less agreeable in the doldrums than it had been in the trades. The ship would lie, hot and stewing, on unrippled water, and then, in a trice, dark clouds would leap out of the far horizon and descend upon her, while lightning flourished across the sky, like a dog shepherding sheep, and loud thunderclaps rattled round their ears. The order would come to take in the light sails and stand by, and, when all was ready to encounter the storm, it would veer away from them and again the ship would lie in a calm sea, with her sails flapping as ineffectively as a hen's wings.

Sometimes, at night, when the deep dark sky was lovely with stars, the ship would lie almost still on the sea that was as deep and dark as the sky, and as lovely with reflected stars. She would hang between heaven and the sea, her spread sails splashed with moonlight

and her yards faintly creaking in the light, listless wind, proud and beautiful. Robert would climb out as far as he could on her brightly-polished jib-boom and gaze on her as a lover gazes on his girl. Her foresails were white with moonshine and so were her main and mizzen topsails, but the rest were dark as velvet, except in little patches where the moonlight pierced between the yards. Here and there a lamp glowed with a red or yellow gleam, and when he looked down on the sea he saw a red or yellow reflection in the trembling water. In these still and silent times he learned to love his ship and realised how sensitive she was, how quickly she answered to the movements of the wind and the sea and threw her masts to the stars as if they were her arms and she would embrace the sky! . . . But the weeks spent in the doldrums were not all spent in such raptures as those. The long hot days were followed by long hot nights, and the watches were full of tedious labour that was often wasted. Hauling and bracing, hauling and bracing to catch any wind that blew, while the sun melted the fat off their bones. The glare of the sun on the sea was intense, and frequently the water would catch a flash of sunlight and reflect it so that one's eyes were dazzled and momentarily blinded. The sea and the ship began to smell of the sun, a long, hot, sweaty smell that seemed stifling! . . . The *Ardrossan Castle* seemed suddenly to be very small. There was no room in which to get away from other people, no place in which a man could be alone. Solitude, for which he had felt no desire before, now became a necessity. His shipmates were too familiar to him, and he felt in himself a disgust with them, even with Charlie

Stephens. They were always there. He tired of their talk. Ching the Cockney was the Philadelphia lawyer of the crew, and his flat, ugly voice continually repeated a tale of injustice! . . . Robert had never realised how boring a word could become until he had heard Ching say "bleedin' " for what appeared to be the millionth time. He would lie out on a yard to brace a flapping sail and hear Ching cursing the "bleedin' 'eat" and "this bleedin' burgoo-jammer" and the "bleedin' sea" and "this bleedin' life!" . . . He would descend to the deck and again he would hear Ching adjuring some "bleedin' " thing or other. In the forecastle, while he tossed on his heat-swollen bunk, he still heard Ching cursing. . . . It was useless for him to try to sleep while this inane clatter went on, and he turned on his side to listen. Ching was in full cry. "Women!" he said, and then laughed derisively. "Wot I don't know abaht women ain't 'ardly worth knowin'!"

"Fat lot you know, Ching——!"

"Ow! An' wot the bleedin' 'ell do you know abaht wot I know?" Ching snarled back.

Robert turned away again. This sort of talk would continue until the end of the dog-watch.

"I've 'ad women all over the bleedin' globe. White women an' black women an' brown women an' yellow women, an' I'll tell you somethink. W'en you've 'ad one woman, you've 'ad all the women! I know wot I'm bleedin' well talkin' about!"

Robert sat up in his bunk. "Can't you think of anything else to say but 'bleedin'!" he shouted.

Ching looked at him as if he could not believe his ears. "Was you talkin' to me?" he said.

"Aye, I was," Robert boldly replied. "I'm sick, sore

an' tired of hearin' you call everythin' bleedin'! For Jases' sake, think of another word!"

Ching strode over to Robert's bunk. "Ow, you're sick, sore *an'* tired, are you, of 'earin' me say 'Bleedin'! Are you? Well, we'll 'ave to 'ave a little practice in syin' it, so that we can get used to it. Nah, then, my bantam, sit up an' sy 'Bleedin'! 'til I tell you to stop!"

He seized Robert by the collar of his shirt and dragged him from his bunk. "Nah," he said, "after me——!"

Robert tried to twist out of Ching's grip, but could not do so. "Let me go!" he shouted.

"Ow, naow, not 'til you've done your recitation, little Willie. Ow, kimmon, nah——!"

Robert kicked out and caught Ching on the shin, and Ching, howling with pain, let him go.

"You'll mebbe leave me alone after that," said Robert. Ching did not answer. He rushed at Robert, lunging at him as he ran, and caught him a horrible blow in the face that sent him reeling against one of the uprights.

"I'll leave you alone," he said, "when I've knocked 'ell aht of you. Git up! Git up, you barstard!" He hauled Robert to his feet and then knocked him down again. There was a movement among the other men in the forecastle. "That's enough of that, Ching!" one of them said. "E's 'ad 'is doin'!"

"Naow, 'e ain't then. Not 'alf 'ad it! An' I down't want no lip from none of you, neither. I'm cock of this walk, I am, see!" He turned again to Robert. "Git up!" he bawled at him. Robert did not move, and Ching kicked him in the ribs. As he did so, Charlie Stephens came down the stairs. "God," he said, "but

it's hot!" Then he saw Robert lying on the floor and Ching kicking him. He did not speak. He seemed to leap from the ladder to Ching's side. He seized him by the scruff of his neck and turned him round.

"Get your shirt off!" Stephens said.

"What you mean——?"

"Get your damned shirt off or I'll tear it off!"

"Oo's interferin' with you, eih! I was 'ittin' 'im, not you!"

"I know you were, and now I'm going to hit you for a change. I'm about your match, and he's not. Are you goin' to take your shirt off or shall I take it off for you!"

"I don't want to fight you," Ching snivelled.

"But I want to fight you, Ching. I just want to smash your face for you. I've a feeling that your nose would look better if it was round at the back of your neck! . . . Take your shirt off, damn you, or I'll strangle you with it!"

All the fight was out of Ching now, but he slowly stripped, and then, with a yell, rushed at Stephens, whirling his fists wildly. He was instantly sent floundering back again by a blow on the chin that made his teeth rattle. He stood for a moment gulping and dazed and then rushed on Stephens again. He dropped on to the floor, thrown there by a frightful punch in the face that made him feel as if his eyes had been squelched out of their sockets.

"Any time you want a thick ear," said Charlie, "you just let me know, and I'll give it to you!" He sat down beside Robert. "That's the only thing I ever learnt at Eton," he said.

"What?" Robert replied.

"How to hit a chap a punch on the jaw. I must show you how to do it!"

"Right you are," said Robert.

VI

The south-east trades came upon them in a rage, and they passed, almost instantly, from intense heat and thin winds into cold air and heavy winds. There was no end to their work. They had overhauled the rigging and set up new braces and patched and repaired the heavy sails and made themselves ready for the storms that were coming to them; and scarcely had they done so than the barometer bumped. The wind rose and howled at them, and the sky filled with hurrying masses of dead gray clouds, and the sea grew angrier and rougher. There were no sea-gulls now flying in their wake, but only shrill, shrieking Cape pigeons and a single albatross that flew into the wind with scarcely any movement of its big, beautiful wings. The great bird seemed not to feel the wind beating against its breast. It could not rest on the rough water, but it lay at ease on the rough wind. There was no time for idling now, or lounging through a watch. Sail had to be shortened and the boats specially lashed and the ship put in shape for the storm whose rage rose steadily from a heavy wind to a strong gale. They stripped down to the fore and main lower topsails and reefed foresail as the gale grew fiercer, and in the morning found great seas flopping over their weather rail, each wave seeming to be bigger than the rest. Robert saw the seas rising up and flinging themselves on the ship and was amazed when he found her still afloat. It

seemed impossible that she should not drown in the great mountains of water that fell upon her, and when the gale became a hurricane and drove the sea with such violence against the bulwarks that the planking was torn from the stanchions and washed away, he felt certain that presently the ship would sink. The daylight dripped away and was followed by a black night. All hands were now wearing the ship in the hope that better weather might be made on the other tack, and, creeping under her battered bulwarks lest they should be washed overboard, they stretched life-lines along the deck on to which great waves continually fell.

"All right, sonny?" Charlie yelled to Robert as they manned the braces. The water was up to their waists as he yelled.

"Yes, Charlie!" Robert answered, though he imagined himself almost a drowned man.

He glanced up at the dark, staggering masts, and felt fear when he thought of himself out on the yards, struggling to fold a sail against the wind that blew it almost out of his control. His imagination stole his courage from him; he could see himself, with torn and bleeding fingers striving to push the canvas back, and then, through standing on a rotten rope or because the wind was too strong for him, losing his hold and falling into the black cauldron! . . . . For a moment he hung back. After all, this was his first trip and his first storm. There were others who knew the job better than he did! . . . . He caught sight of Ching cowering in the dark, and the sight stiffened him. "By God," he said to himself, "he's a bunt-hugger——!" And he followed Charlie, though his heart was in his mouth as he felt the ship lurch and reel and knew that a slip

would throw him into the sea and that he could not hope to be saved from it.

The ship wore round to the port tack, slipping slowly between the heavy seas, but the change was useless, and presently a great pile of water crashed on to them, smashing a boat and carrying away the galley smoke-stack. The water poured down the pipe-hole, putting out the fire and flooding the galley. "That finishes our coffee," Charlie shouted in Robert's ear.

More seas poured upon them ripping and tearing their way aft, until the whole ship was wet and wounded and sore from the pounding that the seas gave her sides. The old man decided to run before the storm, and once more the tired seamen were busy with their gear. They clewed up the foresail and took in the top-sails, and then, clinging to the life-lines, manned the braces again until the ship was headed before the wind. When she was round, she suddenly leapt forward as if she had been struck, and raced along, plunging and rearing, while sea after sea rolled over her sides, two seas meeting mid-way on the deck with a loud cracking noise and hurling great spires of green spray into the air which whipped it white and scattered it along the ship's length. When Robert, for a moment, looked forward, he saw the black masts reeling in pools of boiling white suds, and creaking as if their fibres were being torn apart. A horrible feeling of impotence and solitude possessed him. He and his comrades were helpless. All this rope-hauling and sail-clewing and wearing and tacking was useless; the sea was too strong for them; a single wave could swing over the side and annul all their efforts to save themselves and their ship. The thought that presently he would drown appalled

him when he reflected that no one at home would ever know what had become of him. He was not afraid of drowning, although he deeply desired to live, but unaccountably he felt himself afraid of an unfriended burial! . . . But these melancholy thoughts did not long continue to fill his mind. Orders were yelled against the wind and presently the ship, with most of her sails reefed and the rest flapping in the wind, was sufficiently settled for one watch to go below and shed their clothes and get some sleep. Robert's watch climbed on to the main rail so that they might get out of the way of the water that washed across the deck, and there, clinging how they could, they stayed, wet to the skin, while the sea grew stronger and more violent and the great waves hammered the ship's stern, making her shudder as if she were about to split. The sky was as black as tar. No moon nor any stars lit the heavens, but there was a ghastly white phosphorescent glow over the sea as if the moon had died and its ghost were haunting the waves. Robert looked up at Charlie who had climbed beside him.

"It's a bit rough," he said.

"Rough!" Charlie replied. "This isn't rough! Wait 'til you get a real stinker of a storm!"

"D'you get worse than this, then?"

"Darkie, my boy, you'll not be a sailor 'til you soak your corns in salt water going round the Horn! This is only a taster——!"

"God!" said Robert to himself.

Suddenly the main topsail broke with a terrific noise, and the iron chain sheet was flung about in the wind as if it were whip-cord. When it struck the yard-arm sparks flew into the air and in a little while it had

ripped the sail from top to bottom. All hands were ordered up to stow the broken sail, and then the ship, like a bird with a torn wing thrashed, but more slowly now, before the storm. Her diminished speed made her easier for the sea to board, and great masses of green water flecked with white foam climbed over the stern and leaped across the after-house on to the deck below, where they fell on the men who were lashed to the wheel and for a while submerged them. Then when it seemed to Robert that the sea was beginning to subside, he saw coming over the stern an enormous wall of water. He heard a yell of warning and leaped at the boom and flung his arms tightly around it, and as he did so, the sea fell on him and tried to tear his arms away from the spanker. He was drowning. Tons of water were falling on his head. The weight of them would sink the ship. He could hear a tremendous roaring noise and he felt that his lungs must presently burst! . . . Then the pressure ceased and he opened his eyes and saw that his head was sticking out of a flood of white foam. For a moment he imagined that the *Ardrossan Castle* had foundered and that he was floating on the sea, but his arms still gripped the spanker-boom and presently the ship drew herself up and shook the water from her deck and again ran before the storm. Morning found them still storm-tossed, with high seas splashing over the deck, while cold rain and spume cut their faces. They spent the day in that state, cold and tired and wet, and at midnight, when the storm began to abate, they were ordered aloft to spread sail again. They worked through the night until a gray light dribbled through a wet sky and they saw that the sea was falling. The sun came up behind

the heavy clouds, warming them until their gray edges turned white, and presently as the day strengthened itself, the clouds rifted and revealed blue sky.

"Well," said Charlie, as they turned in, "we've had a bit of bad weather!"

Robert, so tired that he felt he could never get refreshed again, smiled at him and replied, "Aye, it was what you might call dirty!"

Charlie looked at him. "If I was choosing a watch," he said, "you're one of the first I'd pick!"

Robert flushed. "Thank you, Charlie!" he said.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

I

THE *Ardrossan Castle* did not immediately return to Glasgow. A chance to carry a bulky cargo to Calcutta tempted her captain, and when that was discharged, he traded for a long while in the China Seas before he returned to Melbourne, after a second visit to Calcutta. They plied for a time in Australian waters, and then set out for Glasgow again. Nearly four years had passed from the day when Robert had fled from the slag-heaps and joined the *Ardrossan Castle* until the day when he stepped ashore at Glasgow again.

"I'm back in this town," said Charlie, "and I'm damned if it isn't still raining! Hi, mister!" he called to a loafer, "has it been raining ever since I went away?"

"How long is it since you left?" the loafer inquired.

"Four years almost!"

"Oh, well, you're unlucky then, for this is the first wet day we've had since you sailed!"

"I'll stand you a pint for that," said Charlie.

They had been paid off and were now free, but jobless, men.

"What I want to do," said Charlie, when they had stowed their dunnage in a Seaman's Shelter, "is to start a chicken farm in the very middle of England, about as far from the smell of the sea as I can get, but what I'm going to do is to take another job on a ship

as soon as I've spent all my money! What about you, Darkie?"

"I suppose," Robert replied, "I'll just do the same!"

"Did you ever send that postcard from Melbourne to your mother?"

"No. I suppose I ought to send one to her!"

Charlie nodded, and then said, "Or you could go home?"

"I'll not do that," Robert answered.

But a week later the postcard was still unsent, and when Charlie burst in on Robert one afternoon with the news that two jobs were vacant on an American clipper homeward bound for New York, it was forgotten.

"Some of the hands skipped," said Charlie, "and we're only wanted to go to New York!"

"Right you are," Robert exclaimed.

"The old man's a Blue Nose. So is the first mate!"

Robert had heard appalling stories of the Blue Noses, hard-bitten, harsh seamen from Nova Scotia whose only good quality was their great skill in seamanship. In dog-watches, he had listened incredulously to stories of their cruelties until Charlie had assured him that the worst story he had heard of Blue Noses was probably less terrible than the truth. "A blarsted Blue Nose 'ud murder you for bein' late on your watch!" Ching the Cockney had said, and Charlie, who hated to agree with Ching about anything, agreed that a Blue Nose probably would. Blue Noses laid about them with iron belaying-pins, smashing faces and arms and legs with as little compunction as they would feel in smashing a paper bag. They brutally ill-used apprentices. Charlie had heard of a boy who was tied to the mizzen

fife rail for the whole of the time that his ship was beating round the Horn. "The poor little devil nearly died from exposure. He was kept there, half-drowned and miserably cold, day and night, unable to lie down and scarcely able to stand up because the seas broke over him! . . . He did die in the end!"

"Blue Noses'll 'ave a nell all to themselves," Ching asserted. "They won't be allowed to associate with the decent damned!" He himself had been half-killed by a Blue Nose first mate. Ching had been "shanghaied" at 'Frisco. He and the rest of the crew, all dead drunk, were lying in the forecastle, sleeping off the effects of their carouse, when the mate and the second officer came in with iron belaying-pins in their hands and started to sober the crew. "They bleedin' well pulped my fice," Ching said, "an' they killed two chaps! Gawd, if ever I 'ave a Blue Nose in my power I'll knock 'ell out of 'im—an' then I shan't 'ave got 'alf of my own back!"

Charlie interrupted Robert's memories of dog-watch yarns. "Still," he said, "a Blue Nose can't do much if you do your job. And it's only to New York. They're in a hole—nobody in the place will sign on with them—and the pay's good. Coming, Darkie?"

"Are you goin', Charlie?"

Charlie nodded his head.

"All right, then! I'll come, too!" said Robert.

They went down to the river at once and saw the ship, a three-masted California clipper, called the *Blue Dragon,* with fine black sides and a good broad beam. She sat well in the water and seemed a trim and tidy ship.

"Looks well, doesn't she?" said Charlie

Robert, now able to judge a ship, agreed, and Charlie and he went off to see the boarding-master. On the following day, the *Blue Dragon* was towed down the Clyde and, marvellously lucky, they got out to the open sea without the customary beating about the Gareloch. Robert did not like the looks of his mates, among whom was a shivering Arab, and he prayed hard that Charlie and he might be picked for the same watch; they were. The first mate picked them both for the port-watch.

"He is the Bluest Nose I've ever seen," said Charlie, "but I'll bet anything you like he knows his job! I should think his throat will be cut some day or he'll be hanged, or a block will accidentally fall on his head —that Arab looks as if he gave him the jim-jams!—but he knows how to handle a ship—and a crew!"

Robert, regarding the mate's big, blotched, repulsive face with a sense of dread, hoped that the voyage to New York would be swift and short.

II

The *Blue Dragon* was burying her nose in a lop-sided sea, plunging and reeling as the waves hit her sides and splashed on to her decks. Robert felt himself being pushed by the sail he was striving to brace as if it were trying to throw him off. He pressed against it with all his strength, and, so that he might get greater purchase, shifted himself along the yard. He placed his foot on a rope and let his weight rest on it! . . . There was no sound as the rope snapped, for the wind muffled it; he felt his foot drop and he snatched desperately at the sail which bellied against him and pitched him back. His hands scrabbled down the sail

as he fell, and his nails felt as if they were being torn from his fingers. He bumped against something and then bumped again, this time on the deck where he lay inert and bleeding. Death had come to him at last; he would be buried at sea and no one belonging to him would ever know what had become of him! . . . Suddenly he felt himself violently jerked from the deck and made to stand up, though his legs seemed to have lost their bones and to be lumps of flabby flesh.

"What in hell," he heard the first mate yelling at him. "What in hell, you God-damned son of a bitch!" He could not understand what was being said of him. The mate's voice foully rattled in his dazed mind. "You try to dodge your job on this ship an' I'll wring your God-damned neck!" Then he was kicked into the forecastle where he lay, stupefied, on the floor. He must already be dead, he thought, and damned. This place was hell. The mate was the Devil. He could hear some one sobbing and he ceased to think about his fate so that he might listen. Some one was suffering even more than he was. He kept quite still so that he might hear—and then he realised that it was he who was sobbing. His body was shaking and sore. The feel of the floor against his face and legs and hands was painful. When he tried to draw one of his legs into a more comfortable position, it hurt him horribly! . . . He wondered how long he would have to lie there. Some one would surely come and attend to him! . . . He could not remember whether a sinner was sent to hell immediately after death or kept in some suspense until the Day of Judgment. The Catholics, of course, believed in Purgatory, but what did the Presbyterians believe? He had not been tried yet—he could

not remember being sentenced to eternal damnation! . . . Perhaps that was why he was lying on this hard floor—outside the Judgment Seat. Presently he would be brought before the Bar of God—he would stand face to face with Him! . . .

He felt himself being lifted. Some one, whose voice was familiar, was saying, "All right, Darkie!" It was Stephens! Had Charlie died and been damned, too? . . . Were they both about to appear? Charlie was saying something to him. He must listen to what Charlie was saying. "What's that, Charlie?" he meant to say, but his tongue would not utter the words. But Charlie seemed to know what his thoughts were, for he repeated his statement. "I shall have to teach you how to box," he said. Later in the day, so Robert was told, Charlie made a few remarks to the Blue Nose. The remarks were perfectly proper and respectful. "Darkie's unfit for duty for the rest of this trip," he said. "I'm looking after him," he said, "and he's not to be disturbed!" The Blue Nose looked at Charlie, and Charlie looked at the Blue Nose, and neither of them spoke for a few moments. Then the Blue Nose spat and walked aft.

III

Robert heard of the affair while he was in hospital. Charlie and he had signed on for the voyage from Glasgow to New York, and were paid off on their arrival in America. Robert, who was immediately taken to hospital, would have been paid off in any case because of his accident. Charlie might have signed on for the trip which the *Blue Dragon* was presently

to make round the Horn to San Francisco, but declined to do so. He had various reasons, he said, for his refusal, and he recited all of them to Robert, who was impressed and puzzled by the last of them. "I believe in discipline at sea," said Charlie.

"What's that got to do with it?" Robert asked.

"A lot," Charlie replied. "I want to have a talk with that Blue Nose about you, and I can't have it while I'm under his orders!"

"Why?"

"It wouldn't be right for a common seaman to talk to his officer in the way I'm going to talk to that Blue Nose. I mean to say, Darkie, it wouldn't be *right!* There must be discipline at sea!"

"What way are you going to talk to him?"

"Oh, just talk to him, you know, as a friend and a brother! Man to man, you know!"

Robert regarded him with suspicion. "You're up to something, Charlie!" he said accusingly.

"Who? Me?" Charlie innocently answered. "Oh, no, Darkie, no! I just want to have a comradely conversation with him—a nice, homely, man-to-man chat."

In a saloon near the East River, Charlie had encountered the mate. The bar was full of seafaring men, and the mate was in the midst of them. Charlie pulled the door open and stood there a few moments, while he looked for his man. His odd behaviour caused the crowd to become silent and nervous. They paused in their drinking to look at him. One of the crew of the *Blue Dragon* recognised him and called out to him, "Close the door, Charlie!" but he ignored the speaker. He found the mate and walked towards him. "Good-

morning, Blue Nose!" he said. The mate, insulted, put down his glass of beer on the counter. "What in hell——!" he began.

"One moment, Blue Nose!" Charlie interrupted, "I'm going to say a little piece about you!"

"The hell you are——"

"Manners, Blue Nose, manners! You mustn't interrupt a gentleman when he's making a speech!"

The mate lurched towards him. "You God-damned son of a——!"

"Don't talk about me, Blue Nose! My origin is uninteresting. *You* are the hero of this piece!"

The mate lurched away again, snorting with contempt, though he was aware of the sensation which Charlie's odd behaviour and speech had caused among the other men in the saloon.

"Gentlemen," Charlie continued, "here you see before you a fine, healthy specimen of the Blue Nose! You all know what a Blue Nose is—one of God's gentlest creatures!" There was a roar of laughter at this. "All Blue Noses are members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and this Blue Nose is the President of the Society!" There was more laughter at this, and the mate, angered by it, suddenly turned and flung a pot of beer at Charlie, who stepped aside only in time to dodge it.

"Naughty little Blue Nose to waste good beer like that!" Charlie said. A flow of pretty speech interrupted. "Tush, tush!" Charlie protested, when the flow had ceased. "Did anybody ever hear such dreadful, dreadful language from a Blue Nose before?" he said, turning to the others. "Whatever will the Christian Endeavour Society in Blue Nose Land say when it

hears that this dear brother has spoken profane words——!"

The mate endeavoured to calm himself. "What in hell's your game?" he demanded.

"Game!" Charlie replied. "No game, dear Blue Nose. I've come here to reason with you——!" The mate turned away with a snort of contempt. Charlie continued, addressing the crowd: "This gentle Blue Nose is first mate of the *Blue Dragon.* A pal of mine, a young lad and a good sailor—none of your damn bunt-huggers—and I signed on at Glasgow because nobody else would. Well, my pal was furling a sail in a wind fit to blow your head off—first in the rigging he was! Wasn't he, Blue Nose?"

"Go to hell!"

"Well, gentlemen, you can take my word for that. A rope broke and he fell on the deck and damn near killed himself. And what do you think this gentle Jesus did?"

"I know," said one of the crowd "Picked him up and carried him to the captain's cabin and fed him with chicken broth!"

There was louder laughter at this than at anything else that had been said. Then Charlie told them what the mate had done. "Gawd!" some one said, "ain't Blue Noses horrible!" The mutterings roused the mate to defend himself. "What the hell," he said, "ain't I got to maintain discipline? How d'you think a ship 'ud ever get anywhere if the mate went about molly-coddlin' the crew! Don't you damn well know half the men 'ud dodge their work if the mate didn't hammer hell out of 'em!" The mutterings against him changed to approval of his belief.

"Yes, Blue Nose——!"

"Not so much of the Blue Nose," the mate interrupted.

"You are a Blue Nose, and a pretty little Blue Nose, too. You'd take the first prize in any show of Blue Noses—the champion Blue Nose of the world!"

"Shut your mouth——!"

"In a minute, Blue Nose. All I want to say is that you're a damned rotten mate if you can't tell the difference between a decent sailor and a bunt-hugger! Call yourself an officer when you can't do that! You aren't fit to be a bo'sun, let alone a mate——!"

The mate, now in a rage, roared at him. "Who says I ain't fit to be a mate——?"

"I do. You aren't. You're only fit to be on a cattle-boat. You're only fit to be a bum on a barge. You're no seaman——!"

"I'll wring your blasted neck for that!"

"Wait just another second, Blue Nose. I haven't finished my little piece about you!"

But the mate would hear no more. He came at Charlie, shouting as he came, and instantly there was a ring round both of them.

"Gee, this boy's in for trouble," a man in the crowd called to another, while the bartender came from behind the counter and made ineffective efforts to break through the ring and separate Charlie and the mate. The mate swung his great fist at Charlie's chin and then tried to clinch. "No, little Blue Nose, darling, I want none of your affectionate embraces," Charlie said, jumping aside and landing out with his left as the mate staggered from the force of his own drive. His fist fell on the mate's mouth and sent him reeling back.

"Gawd, that's rattled the Blue Nose a bit!"

The mate recovered himself, and stopped for a minute to take breath and direction. "Don't hurry, Blue Nose," said Charlie tauntingly. "Take your time! Or would you rather quit now? I'm not a boy lying half dead on the deck——!"

The mate came at him again, and this time succeeded in landing his fist on Charlie's body.

"Not bad for you, Blue Nose," Charlie gasped.

"Save your breath, chum!" an English voice called to Charlie.

"He won't have any breath when I've done with him," the mate shouted, swinging round to strike again, but as he did so one of Charlie's fists caught him on the chin and the other drove hard against his heart. "Gee, that lad can punch some!" a sailor said. Charlie did not wait for the mate to recover. He drove again, first with his left full in the mate's face, and again with his right in the same spot, so that the mate felt as if his head were being split in two. Blood was flowing down his face, and one of his eyes was closing! . . . He steadied himself, as he realised that Charlie was a boxer and that he was likely to be beaten through reckless fighting. He moved more warily, though his closing eye made vision difficult for him. The manager of the saloon thrust himself through the ring of onlookers, and, approaching the mate first, ordered him to leave the bar. The mate did not reply; he knocked the manager back into the crowd with a blow that half stunned him. The crowd loudly cheered and laughed.

"It's a pity you can't hit me like that, Blue Nose!" said Charlie, taunting the mate, but the mate refused to be enraged. He came nearer to Charlie and began

to feint for an opening, and suddenly he caught Charlie a terrific bang on the jaw. The blow silenced the onlookers. This, they thought to themselves, was punching. The fight was not to be a walk-over for Charlie. The Blue Nose might be a Blue Nose but he could fight. He certainly was game. Give the man his due; he might be and was a bully, but he was no coward. Gee! There he was rushing in again! . . . Missed him, and got a clout on the ear for himself! Gee, that punch would have rattled Charlie all to bits if it had reached where it was meant to reach! . . . The opponents walked round each other, their eyes brilliant with restrained wrath. The mate was breathing very heavily now, and Charlie was beginning to tire. Each realised that he must end the fight quickly if he was to win it. They moved and circled and feinted and then the mate, courageously throwing caution away in the hope that one fierce charge would overwhelm Charlie, jumped in and swung his great fist full at Charlie's face—and a moment later he was lying in a crumpled heap on the floor, too dazed to stir. Charlie at the right moment had leaped aside and then, as swiftly as a soldier drives his sword through a man's body, he drove his right fist on to the point of the mate's chin and knocked him senseless to the floor.

"You'll have a pint of beer with us," said one of the onlookers.

"No, thanks," said Charlie, putting on his coat, "I've got to go and visit a pal in hospital!"

" 'E looks as if 'e'd need to be visited in 'ospital too!" an English sailor said, pointing to the mate. "Thank you, chum, 'ooever you are. You've worked off a bit of score for everybody——!"

IV

Robert's stay in hospital was shorter than Charlie or he had imagined it would be. His fall had badly bruised and shaken him, but it had not broken any of his bones; he had been saved from serious injury by various impediments that had, so to speak, lowered him to the deck by degrees. But he was still weak enough, when he was discharged from hospital, to be unfit for an immediate voyage, and so, when Charlie, discussing their plans, proposed that they should beat their way across the continent to California, Robert was glad to agree. They were not short of money. They were, indeed, fairly well off, for they had not remained ashore long enough to melt their money away, and four years' wages, together with the high wages paid to them on the *Blue Dragon,* enabled them to look on the prospect of a spell of unemployment in America without alarm.

"We'll get a ship at 'Frisco easily enough, and at good wages, too. They pay better money out of 'Frisco than anywhere else—and a rest on land'll do us both good!" Charlie concluded.

Robert's heart sank when he learned that San Francisco could not be reached in fewer than six days. "But how'll we pay the fare!" he said.

"What fare?" Charlie replied.

"The railway fare!"

"My God, Darkie, you don't think we're going to pay a *fare!* I'd feel like a passenger if I did that. No, my hearty young sailor, we're going to beat it——!"

Robert did not understand, so Charlie explained.

"We're going to take free and forbidden rides, Darkie! We'll wander down to the station—only be

sure you call it the *de*pot in this God-forsaken country —and look for a nice comfortable freight train that happens to be going our way, see! And then we'll sneak a ride on it when the brakesman isn't looking!"

"That sounds simple!" Robert replied. "Does anybody in America ever pay a fare?"

"Some people do. I ought to tell you that you'll have to stand on the buffers or lie on top of the wagons, and if the brakesman comes and catches you, he's very likely to bump you off, especially if the train's going full speed. They say that some of these railway companies keep men employed all the year round, just to go up and down the track collecting the corpses!"

"Ah, quit coddin', Charlie!"

"I mean it, Darkie. Brakesmen think nothing of killing a chap. As bad as Blue Noses! Who's to know whether a chap fell off or was pushed off? Nobody knows who he is—or was—and there are no sorrowing relatives to claim him or make a fuss about his death——!"

"Holy O!" said Robert. "D'you mean to say they'd kill a fella!"

"Without turning a hair!"

"Oh! Well, what's the price of a ticket to California?"

"A terrific lot!"

"Couldn't we get a ship here——?"

"With you as weak as you are!" Charlie said.

Robert reflected and then spoke. "Look here, Charlie," he said. "I don't want to be a burden to you!"

"You're no burden to me. Nobody is——!"

"All the same, I know rightly why you're proposin'

this trip to 'Frisco overland when you could easily get a ship here in New York. You don't like leaving me in the lurch!"

"You're absolutely wrong! I'd leave you in the lurch without a minute's hesitation if I wanted to. Don't be sloppy, Darkie. I'm not doing this for your sake. I'm doing it for my own. I want a bit of a rest ashore, and I'd like your company. That's all!"

"You're a hell of a liar, Charlie, but some of your lies are better than that one! Well, all right! I'll give in to you! An' we'll do this beatin' as you call it as soon as you like! When'll we start?"

They did not start at once. Charlie insisted that Robert should recover his strength by staying for a while at a seaside village in Connecticut to which they travelled as paying passengers, since Robert was not yet fit to take free rides. Here they bathed in the surf and lay in the sun, or when the heat became too strong for them, under the shadow of trees or rocks, until Robert felt himself fit again. Then Charlie taught him the science of boxing. "You've got guts," he said during a lesson, "but you've no style. You need both. The chap who taught me used to say that a stout heart and style would take a man through anything anywhere! Come on, man! Put up your dooks!"

"When you're fighting a man, watch his eyes! You can nearly always tell what he is going to do if you watch his eyes. Men who don't know their job always watch the fists, but that's no good. Anybody can deceive you with his fists, but he can't deceive you with his eyes—not often! Now, hit me here—on this spot——!"

Robert tried to hit him there—on that spot, but at

first and for a long while found his fist floundering in the air while he himself was hit there—on that spot. But after a while, his fist floundered less, and then one day it landed there—on that spot, and Charlie staggered back and put up his hand and felt his face.

"Look here, lad," he said, grinning as he spoke, "you're getting a bit above yourself! Do you know that you hit me? Yes, and you damn well hurt me, too!" His tone altered slightly. "You can punch, Darkie!" he said admiringly.

Their boxing attracted crowds, so they resolved to practise in less frequented places. They found a natural "ring" in a wood more than a mile from the town; a flat grassy patch surrounded by trees and bushes where they could box unobserved. It was in this place that they met Lop Ear. They came one morning along the path, so narrow that they had to walk in single file, that led to the "ring," and there in the centre of it found Lop Ear, an oddly, but almost stylishly, dressed man, who was cooking a meal by a wood fire. His coat was made of tweed and his trousers of brown linen; his boots were excellent but unpolished; and his collarless shirt seemed only to have been put on that morning. He was neater than either Charlie or Robert were. His hair was short and tidy and his face was cleanly shaved. His hands were soft-looking and his nails were trim. He looked at the intruders at first with interest and then with resentment.

"Good-morning!" Charlie said.

The stranger nodded his head and moved nearer to the fire. A delicious smell of coffee came from the can on it.

"Pic-nicking?" Charlie continued.

"Pic-*what?*" It was then that his interest in them changed to resentment.

"I thought perhaps you were having a little holiday or something," Charlie said nervously.

"Say, air you presoomin' to be funny?"

"No, I—I—I beg your pardon!"

Robert stared at Charlie in amazement, for Charlie appeared to be embarrassed. He was stammering!

"I suppose you guys is havin' a holiday!" said the stranger.

"Not exactly! My pal's been sick—in hospital, so we'd thought we'd stay here until he got better. Then we're going to beat it to California!"

Instantly the demeanour of the stranger altered. The look of resentment left his face and he became genial again. "Gee," he said, "I thought you was guys that worked. Sit down an' have some cawfee!"

They did as they were bid, and presently were sharing an extraordinary meal, which the stranger produced from parcels that were concealed in his clothes; meat, sandwiches, chops, cakes, bread and butter, a large pie and very good coffee, the smell of which, when they had first entered the "ring," had immediately made them feel hungry. Their host informed them that he was known throughout the whole of Connecticut as Lop Ear, and he drew their attention to the disproportion between his ears which accounted for his nickname. They had only to mention his name to most any one in Connecticut and they would be well and even lavishly treated. Connecticut was the part of America he knew best, but he had beat his way from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and there sure was nothing anybody could tell him

about the United States! He poured out a flood of talk and gave them no opportunity to reply to the questions that occasionally he put to them. He reckoned that the life they led was the finest life of all. Gee, when he thought of the guys that worked! . . . It kinda 'curred to him, though, that if there wasn't any guys in the world who were willin' to work, it 'ud go darned hard with people like Lop Ear! . . . The thought, as it sank deeper into his mind, seemed to frighten him. "Gee," he said apprehensively and more to himself than to them, "I hope no one don't go an' tell them to stop workin'!" He reflected again and seemed to find comfort in his new thought. "But I reckon some folks must like work! They must do! They wouldn't work if they didn't! Gee, that's queer!"

"What's queer?" Robert asked.

"People likin' to work! I never done no work in my life, an' I airn't never likely to do none. Gee, I'd feel ashamed to work! If my parents was to catch me workin', it 'ud break their hearts——!"

Robert's Ulster traditions were being outraged by Lop Ear's talk. "Are you a tramp?" he said indignantly.

"Why, of course. Only we calls them hobos in this country. Airn't youse guys tramps, too!" The look of suspicion reappeared in his eyes as he spoke.

"No, we aren't!" said Robert. "We're sailors——!"

Lop Era sprang to his feet. "Say," he said, "I thought you was the same as me, an' you was workin' men all the while. Boys, that airn't decent. You've deceived me! I'd have given you a meal if you'd told me the truth, but I wouldn't have let you sit here

talkin' to me like friends if I'd knowed you was workin' men! Youse've indooced me to treat youse like hobos, and all the while youse air workers! That aren't decent, boys! You've took advantage of me——!"

Robert stared at Charlie, who began to laugh.

"Be the holy fly!" said Roger, unable to control himself any longer. "D'you mean to sit there an' say we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for workin'—!"

"Youse ought to be ashamed of youseselves for passin' youseselves as honest hobos when youse airn't nothin' but workin' men! Youse kin work if youse want to, but you airn't got no right to associate with folks what don't. I take it real hard of you to abuse my cawnfidence——!"

Robert said "Holy O!" and subsided, while Charlie lay back and roared with laughter.

"Gee, it airn't nothin' to leff at!" Lop Ear complained.

"I'm sorry, Lop Ear," Charlie apologised. "But I don't see that we can do anything——!"

"If youse was to say youse air sorry, that wouldn't be so bad, but to leff——!" He paused for a moment or two and then hurriedly said, "If youse was to give up workin'——!"

"What!" said Robert.

"Repent and be saved!" Charlie said.

"Yeh, that's the ticket! Repent an' be saved!" Lop Ear eagerly exclaimed. "Make up youse mind now you airn't gonna do no more work as long's as youse live unless youse is compelled to, an' kain't help youseselves——!"

"Be a damned tramp!" Robert angrily exclaimed.

Lop Ear gazed at him reproachfully. "You sure air young an' headstrong," he said.

"Darkie's damn nearly dead in his sin, Lop Ear!" Charlie said apologetically. "But I daresay the sinner can be saved——!"

"I don't like this sort of talk," Robert said to Charlie. Charlie ignored him. "You'll hardly believe me," he continued to Lop Ear, "I've seen that chap offering to do other people's work!"

"Gee!" said Lop Ear in what might be called horror.

"That will show you how far gone he is. You'll have a hard job to make a tramp of him!"

"Nobody in this world'll ever do that," Robert said.

"Listen to him, Lop Ear! He's a hardened worker!"

Lop Ear leant forward and began to tell Robert his history. "My parents was hobos, an' so was their parents. It must be over a hundred years since anybody in our family worked. I reckon I got a reputation to live up to! There airn't many old families in America, but I belong to one of them, an' I kin tell you right here an' now I airn't gonna disgrace it—not by workin' I airn't. An' if you wanna keep good with me you gotta stop workin'. I airn't gonna be seen walkin' about with guys that work!"

Robert rose to his feet. "Come on, Charlie," he said sarcastically, "we aren't fit company for his lord god almightiness!"

Charlie took hold of his coat-tail and pulled him down again. "Wait a minute," he said. "Look here, Lop Ear," he continued, "we can promise you something; we won't do any work in America!"

"Well, I reckon that's better'n nothin'——!"

"You can't promise that, Charlie. You said yourself

we were goin' to pick fruit somewhere!" Robert interrupted.

"Except a little fruit-picking!" Charlie continued. "I hope, Lop Ear, that is not against your principles!"

"Well, I don't know. It's darned nearly work. My grandfather never done no fruit-pickin', but my father called it recreation! I wouldn't pick none myself, but I reckon it's a matter of conscience. If youse can pick fruit with a clear conscience then I reckon youse air entitled to pick it! I don't know as my conscience 'ud let me do it——!"

"You see, Lop Ear," said Charlie, "Darkie isn't quite better yet, and I thought fruit-picking would just put him right!"

"I get your point, Charlie. It airn't work; it's medicine! That makes a difference!"

"He'll probably eat more than he picks," Charlie added.

Lop Ear was now reconciled to the idea that his new friends should pick fruit. He even hinted that he might pick a berry or two himself. "They's fruit farms up in Michigan," he said. "Why don't you guys beat it up there with me? You kin easy beat it from Chicago to California."

"We will," said Charlie. "Tell us what to do!"

"Youse leave it to me," said Lop Ear, preparing to pack up.

"How far is it to Chicago?" Robert asked.

"About a thousand miles!" Charlie replied.

"Sufferin' Jases! Are we goin' to stand on buffers all that far?"

"No, sir!" Lop Ear said. "Not all in one spell. We'll step off at places where there's a good jail!"

"A good what?" Robert shouted.

"Jail!" Lop Ear repeated. "I know some good jails——!"

"D'you mean to say you can walk into a jail for the night?" Robert demanded.

"Sure!"

Robert opened his mouth to speak, but words would not come.

"Gee, I know jails where they pay you to go in," Lop Ear continued. "I go reg'lar to some of them, but I never stay more'n a month in any of them. I get tired of bein' in the same place for long!"

Robert gulped and gasped. "Charlie," he said, "I thought you were the champion liar of the world, but you've got to hand it to Lop Ear. He'd make Ananias feel like—like——!"

"George Washington," Charlie suggested.

But Lop Ear paid no heed to them. When he had stowed the food in his clothes, he said, "I'll see you at the *de*-pot. They's a empty truck standin' in the side track. If youse get there after dark an' wait for me 'til I come, youse'll be all right!"

V

Lop Ear was waiting for them at the depot. His body seemed to be bulkier than it was when he left them in the morning, and indeed it was, for he had spent part of the day in begging for food, great quantities of which were stowed in various parts of his clothes.

"What do you do for it?" Robert asked.

"Do!" Lop Ear exclaimed.

"Aye, do you chop wood or what?"

Lop Ear was too disgusted to reply at once, and Charlie, lest Robert should offend him, hurriedly uttered a rebuke. "I'm surprised at you, Darkie," he said, "insulting Lop Ear after all he has done for us. Asking him if he worked! You see," he continued, turning to Lop Ear, "the sort of chap he is—always thinking about work! Overlook it, Loppy!"

"But how do you contrive to get all that meat if you don't do anything for it?" Robert persisted.

"I esk for it!" said Lop Ear with dignity. "I just esk for it!"

"And they give it to you?"

"Most always!"

"The people of this country must be kind-hearted!"

That had not occurred to Lop Ear. "Why shouldn't they give it to me!" he demanded. "There's plenty, ain't there? I gave youse two a share of my food when you esked for it, an' I didn't insult you by eskin' you to do no work for it! I had the food an' youse two needed it! There didn't seem no need to say no more!"

He looked about him to see that no suspicious official was listening near them, and then asked them to follow him. "There's a car in a side track there! I esked a switchman about it an' he told me all about it. It's goin' west an' I guess that's good enough for youse!"

They stole down to the siding in the dusk, and, after walking a little way by the side of the freight train, came to the empty car of which Lop Ear had spoken. They climbed into it and lay down on the floor, while Lop Ear disburdened himself of some of his stores. Presently he thrust food into their hands and, as best they could in the dark, they ate it. In a little while

they heard the noise of the engine being coupled to the train which, after some harsh jolting, began to move out of the depot. They lay still for a few moments after they had finished their food, and then they fell asleep. They were awakened by a light flashing in their faces. A man in uniform was standing in the door of the car looking at them. There was a star on his breast. "Come on, boys!" he said, "you'll be welcome at the old home!"

Robert rubbed his eyes, while Charlie sat blinking in the light. The man with the lantern swung it round in the car. "Lop Ear!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Well, ain't that just fine. I'm genuinely glad to see you. I thought we wasn't going to entertain you no more." Lop Ear smiled amiably and yawned, and the policeman, turning the lantern on to Robert and Charlie, asked, "These guys friends of yours, Lop Ear?"

"Yeah," said Lop Ear, still yawning.

"Well, I'm glad to see any friends of yourn, an' I guess there's a few in the jail that'll be glad to see them, too!"

Robert jumped. "Jail!" he shouted.

"Yeah, the county jail!" the policeman continued. "We ain't been doin' well lately. Youse three'll be a God-send to us! How long'll you an' your friends stop with us, Lop Ear? A coupla months!"

"Coupla hell," Lop Ear replied. "I don't stay no more'n thirty days!"

"All right, Lop Ear, all right! We'd rather you stayed longer, but thirty days'll do. Now, come along, boys, I wanna get home quick!"

Robert could not speak. A terrible fear was forming in his mind, but he did not dare to think about it.

Charlie stepped from the car. "What's all this!" he said sharply.

"All what?" the policeman replied.

"All this damn fool talk——!"

"Damn fool talk!" The policeman turned to Lop Ear. "Gee," he said, "your friend don't seem pleased!"

"Pleased! What about?"

"Your arrest!"

Robert came quickly to Charlie's side. "Arrest!" he said. "What do you mean—arrest?"

"Say," said the policeman, "what in hell's biting youse! Don't youse guys know nothin'?"

"They'se workin' men," Lop Ear said. "They ain't done this before."

"Don't make no difference to me what they are. Youse is all under arrest. Got that?"

"But what for?" said Robert.

"Trespassin' on the track!" the policeman replied. "Come on now!"

They stood still for a moment, and then Charlie and Robert looked at each other and instantly each knew what was in the other's mind. They must run! . . . But the policeman realised what was in their minds. "It ain't no use youse tryin' to escape, boys. Youse'll be caught all right, and efter all thirty days in our jail is nothin'. Why it's a rest-cure, ain't it, Lop Ear?"

"Reg'lar sanatorium," Lop Ear said. "Youse airn't got a chance," he added to Charlie and Robert, "an' a month airn't much. Youse'll enjoy it all right!"

"Come on, boys, come on!" the policeman pleaded.

They descended from the car and followed him into the town.

They were taken to the prison and put into a large

room which was occupied by about twenty men, who sprawled on forms or played cards or amused themselves in other ways. Some of them recognised Lop Ear, and soon he and they were deep in gossip and reminiscences. "This is damned funny," said Charlie to Robert, but Robert did not reply. He felt profoundly shocked. *He was in prison.* His life suddenly seemed to him utterly disreputable, and he shivered with shame when he thought of the humiliation that his mother would feel if she were to know of his plight. To run away from home and lead an adventurous life and some day return with pockets full of money was one thing, and very creditable, but to be put in prison as a common tramp was another thing and not creditable at all. He edged away from Charlie and sat down in a corner where he seemed likely to be undisturbed. All his romance had tumbled to this; he was a gaol-bird. Of what use now to remember the warm nights when he had lain on the deck of the *Ardrossan Castle* and named the stars as they rode through the dark high heavens and cast their reflections on the sea. He was a gaol-bird. How could he comfort himself with memories of the China Seas and brown Indian girls and bright colours on land and water and the thrill of hanging in the shrouds when the wind beat hard against the ship and the sea rose up like a great sheet of green glass and fell on the deck and broke into foaming white fragments—how could he comfort himself with such recollections as these when he remembered that he had been lifted by a policeman and put in prison? An immense misery filled him. His pride in his seamanship dwindled and disappeared. He was a gaol-bird! . . . He recalled a day when his mother

and he, visiting friends, had passed a dismal building behind high walls, and she had told him that it was "the Crumlin," as the prison in Belfast was called because it stood in the Crumlin Road, and the horror in her voice echoed now in his ears. This profoundly shameful thing had happened to him. This happy-go-lucky American jail was a "Crumlin," too. Lop Ear, the tramp, hobo, he called himself, might enjoy life in a jail; Charlie might think it "damned funny," but to him it was disgrace! . . . His eyes felt hot and when he looked at his hands he saw that they were trembling. He wanted to cry, but could not shed his tears; they seemed to boil on his eyes. He looked up and saw Charlie approaching him, and he turned away. He was conscious that Charlie had sat down beside him, but he did not speak. Presently he felt his hand being squeezed, and he heard Charlie saying, "Sorry, Darkie! Damned sorry!"

VI

They were brought before the judge and sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment, and then were taken back to the county jail. "That's all right, boys," said the policeman who had arrested them. "I told the sheriff you'd consented to take a month and didn't want no more and he said he'd fix it up with the judge. But we'd rather it had been sixty days. I guess you'll be as comfortable here as you could be in any jail in America. I reckon there ain't many jails as comfortable as this one. I reckon we do our best for the boys!"

"Yeah, that's right, boss," Lop Ear said. "You don't do bad!"

"Now, that supper you had last night, pretty good, wasn't it?"

"Pretty good, boss!"

"I don't know as you'd get as good a supper anywheres in America——!"

"Excuse me," Charlie interrupted, "but what is this place—a prison or a home from home?"

"Gee, that's just what it is—a home from home!" the delighted policeman said.

"I'll tell you all about it, Charlie," Lop Ear said, "when we get back home from home!"

And when they were again in the jail, they learned that the policeman or marshal, as he preferred to be called, and the sheriff and the judge were paid by results; so many dollars for each arrest and conviction; and the sheriff received a maintenance allowance for each prisoner. Prisons had to be made attractive to hobos to ensure good incomes for the marshal and the sheriff and the judge. There were scarcely any restrictions. Prisoners were not locked in cells at night, nor were they asked to do difficult or, indeed, any work except a little sweeping and cleaning of an unexacting sort, and even that need not be done by a prisoner if he had any conscientious objection to doing it. There were always plenty of prisoners willing to do it for the sake of the exercise. The food was abundant and good, and it was well-cooked, and the prison was comfortable. The prisoners mingled with each other freely and easily, and although they were not encouraged to leave the prison, they could do so without difficulty. Robert's sense of shame at being in such a place dwindled until at last, when his sentence had expired, he regarded it as a joke and was ready to regard himself as a benefac-

tor of the policeman and the sheriff and the judge. Lop Ear had no doubt whatever on that point; these deserving people would, in his opinion, be greatly embarrassed or distressed if he and the hobos did not consent to be periodically imprisoned, and he considered that he was entitled to greater privileges than he had received. "They ought to have been more tobacco and whisky," he complained, when the marshal said good-bye to them and earnestly pressed them to return as soon as possible. "They's a jail where the marshal gives you a dollar and a coupla cakes of tobacco——!"

"All right, boys," said the marshal, "I'll treat you fine next time you come here. Now, just you promise me you'll take sixty——!"

"No," Lop Ear firmly interrupted, "not a day more'n thirty! I can't stay in one place more'n a month!"

"You ain't got no proper feelin's," the marshal mournfully answered. "You can't stay put nowhere!"

"Gee, that's true," Lop Ear exclaimed. "I guess I got to keep on movin'! I got an itch to go somewheres!"

"Where?" said the marshal.

"I dunno. Somewheres!"

They then left the prison and strolled towards the depot where they learned that a freight train would pass through during the evening. They wandered off to the neighbouring woods where they lit a fire and sat down beside it to wait for the train. When they had eaten a meal and were lighting their pipes, remorse filled Lop Ear's mind. "I didn't treat that cop proper," he said. "I oughta stayed another thirty!"

"Why?"

"Gee, he's got a wife and kids, ain't he! And he

has to provide for them! I reckon I oughta done a bit more for him. And the sheriff and the judge! They prob'ly got wives and kids, too. They oughta have somepin done for 'em! I reckon us hobos oughta be good to people that works like they do."

"Well, why don't you go back again?" said Charlie, laughing at him.

"Will youse two come back?"

"No damn fear!" Robert said loudly.

"They treated you fair, didn't they?" Lop Ear said reproachfully.

"A jail's a jail whatever way they treat you!" Robert retorted. "You aren't goin', Charlie?"

"No, I don't think so. It was fun, but I've had all I want of it! Sorry, Lop Ear!"

"Well, I guess youse guys knows best what you wanna do!"

He lay back and smoked his pipe until the train arrived.

"Come on," Robert said, "we'd better start!"

"No need to hurry!" Lop Ear replied. "It won't leave for a long while."

"Anyway, we'd better get intil it——!"

"Gee, Darkie, can't you rest no time! They ain't no need to get excited. It isn't doo to leave yet! You don't wanna be seen gettin' on a train. Your best chance is to wait 'til it's startin'. They won't stop an' throw you off then!"

But presently the whistle blew, and the train began to move out of the station.

"Hell, it's goin'!" Robert shouted, scrambling to his feet. "Come on, we can just make it!"

It had to pass them, otherwise they would have

missed it. Robert jumped as the train, gathering speed, ran by, and swung himself on to the buffers. He looked round and saw that Charlie was holding on to a truck further down the train, but he could not see Lop Ear until he looked back at the fire in the woods. Lop Ear was still stretched beside it, contentedly smoking. Presently, Charlie came across the top of the cars to where Robert stood swaying on the buffers. "You'd better get up here," he said. "It's easier. We can hop off at the first stopping-place and see if there's an empty truck!"

"Lop Ear didn't come!"

"No. I think he felt ashamed of us," Charlie replied.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

I

In the morning, when they woke and looked out of the truck, they found that they were being carried by the side of a river. Robert turned to Charlie and saw that he was gazing at it in bewilderment. "Is there anything wrong?" he said.

"No, I—I don't think there's anything wrong, but I believe we're going back to New York!" Charlie answered.

"New York!"

"Yes, I'll swear that's the Hudson."

"But didn't Lop Ear tell you this train was going to Chicago?"

"No, he just said there was a train going from the depot—that was all. I don't suppose it makes any difference to him where a train goes to, so long as it goes somewhere!"

"But, we want to go to San Francisco!"

Charlie did not immediately answer. He continued to stare at the widening river, broad and beautiful, which flowed past them. "It *is* the Hudson," he said at last. "We *are* going to New York!"

"Oh, well," said Robert, "that'll do just as well. Thank God, we'll soon be on a boat again. I'm sick of this sort of life! How that fella, Lop Ear, goes on year after year livin' like this, I don't know!"

"It's funny, though," Charlie exclaimed, "setting out for San Francisco and landing at New York. Like going from Glasgow to Edinburgh via Hong Kong!"

"I don't care how I get to the sea, so's I get to it!" Robert replied.

And to New York they came, where they joined a Californian clipper, the *American Star,* carrying a miscellaneous freight from New York to San Francisco. They found her lying with three other clippers at a pier on the East River, close to South Street, with stevedores stowing in her hold stuff that seemed bulky enough, judging by what was still standing on the pier, to sink her. Barrels of whisky, a locomotive, kegs of nails, crates of glass, bales of cotton, had to be packed with cases of patent medicine, iron rails and perambulators, and leave the ship on an even keel. She looked well, and Robert, who never gazed on any ship now without feeling his heart rise within him, would not let Charlie consider the other clippers, but hurried him aboard to inquire if two hands were needed. Two hands were, and later in the morning, after they had seen the boarding-master, they went aboard with the rest of the crew; most of them were only beginning to be sober after a debauch on the previous night. They dragged their dunnage to their quarters and then assembled aft while the shipping commissioner called the roll, and the business of the boarding-master was settled. When the dunnage had been searched for drink and weapons, and any that were found were locked away, the crew manned the capstan and the anchor was heaved up and the ship was towed out past Sandy Hook by a tug. She moved through sunshine and quiet water out to the ocean, past Staten Island towards the Nar-

rows and Sandy Hook lightship where the tug was cast off. She would not return to New York in less than nine months. A hundred and thirty days would pass before she sailed through the Golden Gate of San Francisco, and a hundred and thirty more before she dropped her anchor again in the East River—which would be fast sailing and possible only if the weather were reasonably good. Her sails were set and filled with freshening wind, and coloured by the sun and sky with flecks of blue and gold. Unimaginably beautiful she seemed as she slipped through the sea. Her main-yard was back and she was hove to so that the pilot might be dropped by the pilot-boat which was lying near Sandy Hook lightship, and then, when he was clear of her side, her yards were braced again and she went proudly out across the Atlantic towards the Cape Verde Islands.

II

Two months later they came in sight of the island of Staten Land and Robert realised what it was to soak his corns in salt water off the Cape. Their hope of slipping through the Le Maire Straits was disappointed, and they had to beat to the south east of Staten Land. They shoved the ship's nose well round the island and ran into westerly gales that were good enough weather and took them fairly south of the Horn in a week. But the luck did not last. They sighted the icy head of the Cape and, setting their bearings, hauled off again to the south and prepared themselves for a good run, but had scarcely done so when a white squall came tearing towards them and they had to clew up their mainsail

and let go their topsail halliards and stand by. They floundered in a heavy head sea, while the white cloud rushed upon them, churning the sea into foam and flinging showers of hail and spume before it. The wind and water roared terribly at them, and presently the sea smashed against the ship's side, throwing her over on her beam-ends, and smothering her in mist and spray. Robert, clinging tightly to the weather rail, could see nothing but a swirl of water and hear nothing but the sound of the sea and the wind. He felt that the ship must founder, for this squall surpassed in severity any that he had ever known, but while the water poured over him, the squall flew by as swiftly as it had come and the ship righted herself and the water ran off her decks and again they were floundering under lowered topsails in a choppy flood. He leant against the rail, gasping for breath, and saw the cold gleam of the setting sun reflected on the white peak of Cape Horn. The breeze freshened and they stood off again to the southward, tacking to clear the Diego Ramirez Rocks and ride into the Pacific. The tack began well, but did not continue well, and again they found themselves hammering against a rising head wind and a rising sea. They shifted from tack to tack to gain some westing, but the wind and the sea forced them back and would give them no relief. They were battered through gales of ice and sleet and hail and snow for three weeks and then, sick and sore and tired, they stood inshore again to take their bearings and found when they made a landfall that they were still at the Cape! In twenty-one wicked days they had not progressed a mile on their way to the north.

"Lop Ear'd have the laugh on us, Darkie, if he could see us now," said Charlie. "Don't you wish you were back in the county jail!"

"I damn near do!" Robert replied.

Then, when despair was about to settle upon them, the wind shifted and the sea fell and they were able to take a tack that cleared the Cape and brought them into the Pacific in a single day. They now moved north with some ease and swiftness and felt that they would run up to California in comfort. Several weeks after they had rounded the Horn, they saw the signs of a storm; the wind steadily rose on them and the glass steadily fell. Robert and Charlie were aloft desperately endeavouring to furl the thrashing sails when suddenly a half-furled sail bellied and struck Charlie from his hold and sent him hurtling down sixty feet to the deck. Robert and another sailor caught at the sail and folded it, and then, their job done, descended. Neither of them spoke. Robert felt his hands tremble as he hung on to the ropes and he knew that his heart was sick. A terrible disgust with the sea filled him. Men struggled incessantly with wind and water and were battered and beaten from ocean to ocean. There was no satisfaction in this life, only hardship and labour and poverty and hunger and weariness and probably death! If Charlie were dead! . . .

He had been carried to the hospital room where the captain and the mate were bending over him and, by the light of a swaying lamp, giving him what care they could. He was terribly broken, and each minute while they watched by him, he weakened until, at midnight, as the ship's bell tolled for the "death"-watch, he died. His body was taken to the carpenter's shop and pre-

pared for burial. It was washed and dressed in his best shore clothes and then sewn into a heavy piece of canvas. Two iron shackles were tied to his feet, and he was laid on the sliding-board and covered with the ship's ensign. Robert did not speak while this was done, nor did any one speak to him. He sat by the body through the night nor was he asked to leave it. The affection which he and the dead man bore each other was known to all on board the boat and he was left alone with his sorrow. He stared at the body lying on the sliding-board and told himself that it was Charlie's body, that Charlie was dead, but although he incessantly told himself this he could not believe it. In a moment or two, Charlie would tear open his canvas shroud and fling aside the ensign, and the iron shackles and jump off the sliding-board! . . . He put out his hand and touched the body. So still! That immovable thing was Charlie! He had beaten about the oceans of the world and now he was to be buried in one of them. He had lived a hard and laborious life but would suffer no more. All his days of wet and hungry faring were done now. The wind and the sea could not hurt him any more. Charlie was dead! . . .

As the sun rose up out of the sea and split the darkness Robert felt himself utterly alone. The world seemed suddenly to be empty. He had known many men in his journeyings, but no man, except this one, had entered his affections. He could not remember the names of some of his mates in his first ship, so little hold had they had on his regard. Charlie had seized all his affection and there was none left for any one else. And Charlie lay there on that board, waiting to be tipped into the sea! . . .

He shuddered in the raw air that blew out of the bleak sky. Thick, leaden-coloured clouds hung low on the horizon and lay close above them. The wind wailed through the rigging, while the sails impotently flapped and the spars creaked and the ship heaved and rolled in the gray sea. Eight bells sounded, and the whole of the ship's company assembled on the deck to bury the dead, but Robert remained immovable by the body. The flag was hauled half-mast on the monkey-gaff, and the main-yards were backed. Then four of his mates lifted Charlie's body on to their shoulders and carried him aft to the lee gangway and laid him on the rail. Robert mechanically followed them, and stood by Charlie's side, while the rest of the crew stood by. The captain came forward, carrying a prayer-book in his hand, and, raising his voice above the wind, read the service for the burial of the dead at sea. "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He paused for a moment while the wind whistled over their heads, and then continued. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord." The men did not move, but stood with their heads uncovered, withdrawn from the clamour of the elements. An abrupt end was likely to come to a sailor. A voyage rarely passed without the death of one of the crew. In the midst of life, the sailor was in sudden death. A rotten rope, the lurching of the ship, a bellying sail, a swift inrush of water . . . and in a moment the sailor was destroyed.

The captain continued to read the service. "We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ Who at His coming shall change our vile body, that it may be like His glorious body according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself." As he said the words, "We therefore commit his body to the deep——" the men who had carried Charlie to the rail raised the sliding-board so that his body glided off it and dropped into the sea. They heard the splash as he struck the water, and the sound stiffened them. The sky seemed grayer and colder and more bleak than before, and the noise of the wind and the flapping sails and the spars beat on their ears like cries of pain. The captain closed the book and returned to the quarter-deck.

"Fill away the main-yards!" he shouted.

The men remembered that they were seamen. They wiped the spume from their faces and returned to their jobs. But Robert did not move, nor did any one speak to him or try to move him. He stood by the rail where Charlie's body had rested and stared at the cold gray sea into which it had been cast. Great gray banks of cloud, streaked with darker tints, piled themselves high in the heavens, while sea-gulls and albatrosses spread their wings over the gray sea beneath them. He could hear the noise made by the sails as they were hauled into place and could feel the spume blowing into his eyes. But he felt that he was outside all these things, for Charlie was dead and his body was drifting down there beneath the tide. Suddenly he shivered. Then

he walked away from the rail, and as he walked, he cried.

III

They ran easily up to the trades where they overhauled their gear and put away the heavy sails after they had been repaired. Following Charlie's burial, they had had fine weather, and were able to run off more of their westing than they had imagined likely. In a fortnight they moved well up the Pacific and felt confident that they would make their port without serious delay, despite the loss of time they had suffered off the Horn. But they lost again in the doldrums all that they had won in that fair fortnight, and their tempers were tried by heat and shortage of water. They had scoured the ship to make her look pretty when she passed through the Golden Gate, and as they knelt in the fierce blistering sun to holystone the deck, on which pitch bubbles appeared from the seams, they cursed and swore horribly. Some of his sorrow left him, as Robert scraped and painted the ironwork or scoured paint-work with sand and canvas or pushed the heavy holystone backwards and forwards on the hot deck. The fine, calm weather now became an anxiety to them, for no rain fell to replenish the water-casks, and they had to accept reduced rations of water. They got through the doldrums very luckily, and, although three men were down with scurvy, they hoped to make port without further affliction. Three weeks later, during which time the number of men suffering from scurvy had grown to five, and while they were still a hundred miles from San Francisco, the wind fell and they ran into thick fog, where they lay for twenty-

four hours floundering and flopping on a greasy ocean. They sounded their fog-horn and lit flares to warn steamers of their presence, and waited, anxious and apprehensive, for something to happen. At the end of twenty-four hours they heard a syren sounding, and after a while an ocean-tug sent by the owner to find them came out of the lifting fog, and they hailed her and told her of their need for water and green vegetables. Then, when they had manœuvred for safer position, the mate of the tug came aboard bringing news and rations, and the parched crew slaked their thirst, letting the delicious water rolls about their mouths and down their throats as if it were wine. The listless, irritable air that lay heavily on each officer and man disappeared. A singular gaiety filled them, and they ran like happy boys to pay out the towing hawser to the tug. When they were secured to her, and were standing in towards the land, the old man ordered them to clear up their square sails and stow them away. Before the dark descended again, they would be ashore, with pay in their pockets, discharged and free. Early in the afternoon, they were off Farralone Island, while thousands of gulls poised and wheeled above their stern, and soon afterwards they entered the Golden Gate. When they reached their anchoring ground off Alcatraz Island, they let down all their fore and aft sails, unbent them, and stowed them in the lockers. They dropped anchor, and were immediately surrounded by small boats full of runners from boarding-houses, cormorants that greedily devoured sailormen's pay and shipped them, half-dazed with drink, to sea again to make more money for them. They brought bottles of bad whisky with them and

affectionately called to the crew, but they were not allowed to board the boat until work was finished, and the men were paid off. There was little left to be done. The yards were laid square, all gaskets and ropes made neat, and the ship was pumped. Then the crew were paid off, and instantly the runners leapt on deck and ran to seize the men. In a few minutes, the whole crew except Robert and the officers and the sick men were in the runners' boats, with their dunnage, heading for the city from which, three or four days' later, they were shipped again, destitute and drunk, for another voyage on another ship. At the end of that journey, more cormorants would meet them and, in spite of all their experience, they would let themselves be devoured again. And so it would go on until one day a rope broke or a sail suddenly blew out or the ship lurched in a storm or a great sea came over the side! . . .

IV

It was the old man who proposed to Robert that he should remain on board and return with the ship to New York, and Robert consented. He would have to go to sea again, and he might as well rejoin the *American Star*. The sick men were sent ashore to hospital, and those who were left on board, officers, apprentices and Robert, found themselves busily employed in getting ready for sea. In the evening Robert went ashore and lounged about the city; but his heart was heavy with solitude. Charlie's loss affected him more poignantly now than it had done since the day of his burial; for he continually thought of himself going here or there in his company. He dragged through the hectic

streets, half resolved to return to the ship and stay there until she sailed. While he was in this mood, he saw a boxing-booth, and, almost mechanically, entered it. A crowd of men, mostly sailors, were watching some desultory bouts in a listless manner. They were waiting as patiently as possible for a more important exhibition, but when the hour at which the fight was to take place arrived, the owner of the booth and his friends anxiously scurried about, glancing apprehensively at the audience as if they feared trouble. Finally, after some disturbance, cat-calls, and stamping of feet, the owner of the booth, an Italian, entered the ring and, looking extraordinarily flabby and frightened, informed his patrons that he was reluctantly obliged to disappoint them. Young Ike who had challenged Matt Malone had failed to appear. Young Ike, he was afraid, had lost heart when he thought of Matt's terrible left! . . . This sally provoked no laughter; it provoked angry exclamations instead; and the owner of the booth hurriedly added that rather than disappoint his patrons, he had decided to give a prize of two hundred dollars to any man of any age or weight, then present, who would stand up to Matt for three rounds. They all knew what Matt's left was like! This was not to be a pretty-pretty fight for points. Matt promised that he would do his best to pulverise any person who challenged him. That was what had frightened the wits out of Young Ike. Would any gentleman present oblige?

A sailor shouted: "What's the prize for knockin' Matt silly?"

The roar of laughter which followed this question put heart into the owner of the booth, and he boldly

replied that he would double the prize for anybody who did that! Two hundred dollars for the man who stood up to Matt for three rounds, *four* hundred dollars for the man who knocked him out!

Matt entered the ring, a big brawny man, with a flat face and a broad flat nose that had been made flatter than Nature had meant it to be. He had a jaw that looked like the runner of a sledge, and his great hairy chest seemed to be made of iron. He sat down in a corner of the ring and blinked at the assembly which gazed at him with admiration. The owner of the booth, exhilarated by the good temper of the crowd, again exhorted men of courage and skill to make money by punching Matt senseless. "Matt won't hurta you very bad," he said, winking at the audience. "Will you, Matt?" he demanded, turning to the boxer, who merely lifted a big fist and doubled it.

"Dat's only his fun," the owner of the booth said. "He's kinda as lettle birda! When he hits anybody it hurta him more dan it hurta them!"

So that those who were thinking of risking a bout with Matt might see how he boxed, the owner requested another boxer to come into the ring and give a three-round exhibition, at the end of which he hoped that he would not have to appeal in vain for a challenger!

. . .

Robert watched the sparring match very closely. He saw that Matt had immense strength and punching power, but he saw, too, that he was slow in his movements and that his mind was not quick to understand a situation. A weaker man, with a more agile mind, might knock him out if he could get a good blow in

quickly. It would have to be a quick blow, for Matt was the sort that could not tire! He remembered Charlie's counsel if ever he should have a fight a big, beefy man. "Hit him as hard as you can on the point of the chin—just here, Darkie, and he'll drop down damn nearly dead! . . ." Charlie, if he were present, would like to see Robert boxing that big fellow. Even if Robert did not last out the three rounds, Charlie would like to see him taking him on! . . . And thinking thus, when the sparring bout was finished, and the owner of the booth again exhorted a man of mettle to take a chance of winning a large sum of money, he stood up and said, "I'll fight him!" There was a buzz all round him that made him recall a similar sensation he had caused. "When oul' Blondin walked the tightrope!" he thought, and suddenly his mind was full of memories of home. But he had no time for memories. He had publicly challenged Matt and could not withdraw from it, even if he wished to withdraw. He must concentrate his mind on the fight. The minute the gong sounded, he must rush in and hit Matt as hard as he could on the chin! . . .

When he had stripped and was sitting in his corner of the ring, he glanced at Matt, and suddenly his nerve failed him. How could he hope to stand up to, let alone knock out, that mountain of a man? He felt as if he were going to be sick. Why must he always go charging into things like this? Showing off—that was what he was doing! Here he was, stripped to the skin, and about to fight a trained pugilist, although he had not had any training since Charlie had been killed and he had probably lost strength in the last few weeks of

the voyage when the ship was short of water. What kind of a mug was he? All these men were just waiting to see him smashed to bits. That big fellow in the opposite corner would come over to him and lift his thick fist and drop it on his face and then—good-bye, Robert! Well, he was in for it, and he had better make the best show he could. He must be careful to do exactly what Charlie had always instructed him to do with a fellow like this. What was it Charlie had said? Jump in on him before his mind has had time to start working and hit him hard on the chin—just there in that one spot—and out he'll go! To hit Matt on the chest would be about as effective as hitting a ship's side with a tin tack; he wouldn't feel it. And you might punch his nose till all was blue, and he would just laugh at you! There was only one blow worth giving the fellow, and if he didn't give it to him good and quick, then he had better lie down at once and take the count! . . .

The bell rang, and the buzz of talk ceased. The silence had an oddly stimulating effect upon Robert, and he rose from his corner with some confidence, and walked to the centre of the ring. Matt came in a more leisurely manner, as if he felt that this business was pure waste of time. In a few moments, the rash young man who had accepted his challenge would be lying flat on the boards, with blood on his face and half his wits knocked out of him! Why bother about a trifle? He lounged across the ring, smiling almost benignly, and paused a moment to tip a wink to his admirers. "Watch me eat this fella!" he seemed to be saying. "Just watch me swalla him in one bite! . . ." And then he lost consciousness!

V

It seemed to Robert, as Matt approached him, that Charlie suddenly shouted, "Charge him, Darkie, charge him quick! His fat head hasn't begun to think yet. Run over and hit him as hard as you can just there on that spot on his chin. Don't give him a minute to think. Break your knuckles on his chin! . . ." And with a terrible sense of elation, he jumped at Matt and hit him a terrible thump on the very place—and Matt dropped as if he had been shot through the heart, and lay still on the ground while the pale and sweating proprietor of the booth wrung his hands at the side of the ring and the astonished assembly gasped and then rose and gaped in silence at Matt, stretched like a slaughtered bullock on the ground, until at last comprehension came to them, and they realised that Matt was out, whereupon they cheered as if they meant to split their throats. Robert, flushed and elated, glanced round at the shouting throng and was conscious of hands trying to seize him. He could hear an excited Irish voice yelling, "Showldher him, boys! Showldher him, the boxin' boy!" and presently he was lifted on to men's shoulders while the Irishman slapped his bare back and said, "You're game ball, me boyo! That's what you are—game ball!" No one regarded the stricken Matt.

"Let me down," Robert said to the men who had shouldered him, but they were too excited to hear what he was saying, so he turned to the shouting Irishman. "Tell them til let me down," he said, "I want til put my clothes on!"

"Right you are, my honey boy!" the man replied,

"an' it's me's the lad'll be proud and plazed to put them on you. Make way now for the game-ball boy that stretched Matt senseless on the floor! Make way, now! . . ."

They carried him towards the dressing-room, and as they did so Robert caught sight of the proprietor of the booth.

"Wait a minute!" he called to his supporters. "That fella owes me four hundred dollars!"

"I paya you! Oh, yessa, I paya you!" the proprietor hurriedly exclaimed. "I look after Matt, den I paya you!"

"You'll pay him now," a man yelled. "None of your dago dodges here, Foxy Face! Pay the lad in front of the public, an' don't slip nothin' over on him!"

The proprietor protested. He was an honourable man and would not dream of cheating anybody. When he had attended to Matt! . . .

"Matt can wait!" they shouted, and at last the proprietor with hatred in his eyes paid four hundred dollars into Robert's hand. "If you likea," he said, "you staya here and boxa for me!"

"I'm a sailor, not a boxer," Robert replied.

"Well, you come and talka wit' me in my office. I give you nice booze! . . ."

"Don't take it, boy!" the Irishman interrupted. "It'll rot the guts out of you!"

"I give gooda booze," the indignant proprietor said. "You come an' geta dressed, yes, and I have lettle talka wit' you!"

Robert shook himself free of his admirers, and followed the proprietor to the dressing-room. He still

held the dollar bills in his hand. "I will keepa it for you," the proprietor said, "in my safe, no!"

"Thanks," Robert said, "but I think I can look after it all right!"

"Very gooda. Very gooda."

Robert dressed himself, and then put the money into a pocket inside his coat.

"Well, good-night!" he said to the proprietor.

The proprietor protested. "No, no," he said, "you musta not go like dis. You musta come to my house and talka wit' me!"

"I'm in a hurry to get back to my ship!"

"I know, but we will not stoppa long. Looka here, I take you somewhere, not far! . . ."

"I'm not goin' with you anywhere!" Robert said firmly.

"Oh, very gooda, very gooda! I wanta treata you nice, but you not treata me nice! Very gooda, very gooda!"

He waved his hands as who should say, "There is no civility in the world!" and stood still, while Robert prepared to leave. "I give you gooda money to boxa, but you say 'No': you like better go to sea, and be half damn killeda!"

"Well, I'm a sailor," said Robert.

"It is hard life, no?"

"Damned hard!"

"Then why go when I givea you gooda money to staya! . . ."

Robert did not reply but opened the door of the dressing-room. The crowd still stood outside, waiting to lionise him, and when they saw his face in the door-

way they sent up a shout of welcome. Robert shut the door again.

"You not lika de crowd, no?"

Robert shook his head. "Is there no way out?" he said. "I want to get back to my ship!"

"You go wit' dem, dey makea you drunk, yes, and steala all your money—four hundred dollars that I giva you, yes!"

"Can't you get me out another way?"

The proprietor put his finger on his lips. "You comea wit' me," he said. "I taka you nice place, not far, where you stay a leetle time, yes. Den you go to your ship, yes. What is your ship, no?"

"The *American Star!*"

"A gooda ship, ver' gooda ship, yes! You comea dis way, t'rough dere!" He opened a narrow door which led into a dimly-lit passage at the end of which there was another door opening on to the yard. They passed through the door and crossed the yard, at the opposite side of which there was a tall, dark-looking house.

"We go in dere a leetle time and waita," the proprietor said. "Dey will go away and den you can go, too. Yes! You sitta in dere and rest yourself. Den you go!"

He tapped oddly on the door which was suddenly opened by a negress. A stream of bright light passed into the yard, and Robert, half-dazzled by it, felt himself pushed through the doorway by the proprietor of the boxing-booth. "We go upstairs," the proprietor said, as much to the negress as to Robert. "I go first and show you where!" he added to Robert, and then

turning to the negress said, "You tella Joe I come!"

The negress closed the door, and the proprietor led Robert towards the stairs. As they ascended, he said, "It is ver' quiet here—yet! Too soon, yes! But it will be all right!"

"Is this where you live?"

"Sometimes, yes! Sometimes, no! But I come when I likea. Dis room will be ver' quiet!"

He opened the door, and, switching on the light, asked Robert in. "You see, it is ver' quiet," he said. "No one comea here a longa time yet!"

Robert glanced round the oddly-furnished room with curiosity. "Who lives here?" he said.

The proprietor put his finger to his nose and leered at him.

"Nice people," he said. "Ver' nice people! You likea dem, yes! But they not ready yet for visitors, no! You staya here a little time, and you see dem!"

"I don't like the look of it," Robert murmured suspiciously.

"Don't likea it! But it is beautiful and so quiet!"

"I think I'll go now! . . ."

The proprietor spread his hands again. "If you likea," he said, "but dose men dere, dey are still dere, and dey take out you to a saloon, yes, an' makea you drunk! . . ."

"Nobody can make me drunk if I don't want to be drunk!"

"No? Dat is gooda. I likea to hear you saya dat! Dat is ver' gooda. I will have one leetle drink wit'

myself, yes! I needa to makea myself quiet after de fight."

"Yes, an' while you're havin' it," Robert said, "I'll just clear off. I suppose there's more'n one way into this place!"

The proprietor mixed himself a drink before he replied. "Oh, yessa," he said, "dere is de front door. You can go dat way!"

"Good! I'm goin'!"

He opened the door of the room and went into the passage again. As he did so, he saw the negress coming up the stairs. "Where's the front door?" he said to her.

"I show it to you," the proprietor said, following him into the passage. "Come dis way!"

He led Robert along the passage in the opposite direction from the back stairs, and then took him down a flight of carpeted stairs into a passage, at the end of which was a door heavily hung with curtains. Another door on the right led into a room from which Robert could hear the sound of voices coming. As he approached this door, the buzz of talk changed to laughter, and he heard jingling music being played.

"I just see! . . ." said the proprietor, opening the door and peering in. Robert turned to look behind him and saw the negress smiling from the stairs.

"Come in one leetle moment," said his guide, opening the door still wider. Robert hesitated. "Just a leetle moment," the proprietor pressed, taking hold of him by the arm and drawing him in.

The room was brightly lit, and the walls seemed to be covered with gilt mirrors. As Robert stared about him, it seemed to him that the room was full of girls.

"Come in, sweetie!" he heard one of them call to him. The proprietor of the boxing-booth drew him well into the room and shut the door behind him.

"You will likea dis," he said.

VI

The girl who called to him was lightly clothed. Pieces of purple tulle dripped over her bare breasts and arms, and she seemed to Robert to be wearing only a short white petticoat instead of a skirt. Other girls were sitting or standing in various parts of the room, some wearing elaborate evening dresses, others almost naked under their dressing-gowns. They were chattering and laughing while the girl, who had called to Robert to come in, pounded on the piano. She rose as he entered.

"Gee," she said. "I'm glad some one's arrived! I begun to think all the men was dead. 'Devenin', Antonio!" She turned to the proprietor of the boxing-booth as she spoke, who smiled fatly at her and then subsided into a gilt chair.

"He box wonderful!" he said, pointing to Robert. "Wonderful he box!"

"I like a man that can fight," the girl exclaimed, going across the room to where Robert stood, uneasily gazing about him.

"He knocka Matt out!" Antonio continued.

The announcement made a sensation, and the girls, startled out of their giggles and posturings, clustered together, murmuring "Gee!" and "Did you hear that!" "Knocked Matt silly!" "Perhaps that's why no men come in to-night. Too excited with the noos!"

"Dey's all outsidea, waitin' for him to come!" said Antonio.

The girl who had risen from the piano, put her arm in Robert's and drew him into the corner of the room. "Come on, kid," she said, "a boy that can knock Matt silly ain't gonna be shy with the girls."

The laughter was renewed, and the girls crowded Robert into the centre of the group, one of them planting herself on Antonio's knee. "What's your friend's name, Antonio?" said this one.

"I notta know," Antonio answered. "He walka into my show and he knocka Matt silly and I givea him four hundred dollars! . . ."

The sensation was repeated. The girl on Antonio's knee could scarcely believe her ears. "Did you part with four hundred dollars?" she exclaimed.

"Yessa. I not likea it!"

"Gee, I must kiss that boy," she continued, springing up and running to Robert as she spoke. She put her arms round his neck and kissed him. "I wish I'd seen you do it!" she said.

She tried to draw him away from the girl who had just taken possession of him, but was not successful.

"I got him first, Clara," that one said, "an' I'm gonna keep him. What's your name, sweetie?"

Robert freed himself from her clasp. "Just a minute, miss!" he said. "I didn't know I was comin' into a bad house! . . ."

"That ain't polite!" Clara said, seizing him, now that he was free of the other girl.

"I'm not tryin' to be polite!"

"No, an' you ain't succeedin' none," she said. "Come on, honey, an' be sporty! What's your name anyway?"

"Robert!" he replied.

"Well, come an' sit here beside me. I just love a man that can fight! An' any fella that can put Matt to sleep can have me for life, just for askin'!"

While she was drawing him towards a red-covered couch at the end of the room, the door opened and the negress showed in a party of five men. Instantly the other girls turned from Robert to them, and in a few moments the room was full of laughter and talk and tinkling music. A girl, with red skirts that barely touched her knees, stood up to dance with a shy, tall Swede who laughed nervously at nothing, and shortly afterwards all the others were dancing, too.

"Do you wanna dance, kid?" Clara said to Robert.

"I can't dance," he replied.

"Well, I'll learn you," she said.

But he shook his head. "You go an' dance," he urged, "an' I'll watch you!"

"You'll stay here till I come back?"

He looked at her for a few moments. She was a pretty, plump girl, with long plaits of fair hair tied round her head. Her lips were reddened, so that her little sharp teeth seemed very white when she smiled. She was a Bad Woman. His mother had sometimes spoken very vaguely and in tones full of horror, of Bad Women, and sometimes, with a trembling heart, he had hurried through "the kip" in Academy Street, glancing fearfully through the windows of the spruce and well-polished houses in which the Bad Women lived. Several times he had seen them, lounging in the doorways in wrappers and florid evening dresses, just as these girls were dressed, and once he had seen a terrible fight between two of them; one, tall and fair, the other,

little and dark, both of them drunk and furious. Even now he could recall how he had slipped his arm round the waist of the little dark one, when the crowd separated them. Under the loose dress she wore he could feel her corsets, hard, inflexible things that had seemed to him somehow to be symbols of wickedness. Those were the expensive women, who lived in the wicked houses and had bedrooms, so he had been told by other boys, that were masterpieces of luxurious vice. Their beds were indescribably wicked. The walls were covered with pictures of naked girls. There were books and photographs! . . . But all the women in "the kip" were not living in luxury. There were drink-sodden "shawlies" who could be bought for a few pence or a pint of porter. You saw them, in the daytime, fast asleep in corners and crannies, their faces horribly blotched! They made you feel afraid. That, you said to yourself, was what sin did for you—made you foul to look at. On the night when the Bad Women fought with each other, he had seen children hiding in dark doorways. They hid there every night, waiting for the men to leave their mothers, so that they could creep indoors and go to bed. They had all been born in "the kip," and when the girls grew up they would become Bad Women, too! . . . And now, here in San Francisco, Robert was sitting in a kip-shop, and, perhaps, outside these women's "gets," if they had any, were crouching in dark doorways, waiting for him and the other men to have done with their mothers. He began to feel physically sick. The hot air of the room affected him, and he tried to rise from the couch, but Clara would not let him. She threw herself on to his knees and put her arms around him. He could smell

the perfume on her clothes and in her hair, and feel her body under her thin clothes.

"You like me, kid?" she said.

All his nerves seemed to be galloping about his body.

"You're all right," he said, his throat so parched that the words seemed to creak out of his mouth.

She snuggled closer to him, and again his nostrils were filled with perfume. He glanced across the room and saw that Antonio had a girl on his knees. Their eyes met and Antonio smiled and called to him, "You enjoya yourself. Clara is gooda girl. Plenty fun, Clara!" He raised his glass and waved it to Robert. "You have not'ing to drink," he said. "But you musta have somet'ing to drink! . . ."

"No, thanks," he called back.

"Gee, I'd like a drink," Clara interrupted, raising her head. "Buy me a whisky, kid!"

She did not wait for him to speak, but called to the negress who was carrying drinks to another couple. "Two whiskies, quick!" she said. Then she snuggled back into Robert's arms, and lay there until the negress returned. She drank the whisky almost in a gulp, and made him drink his quickly, too.

"That's good," she said. "I needed that. This room's hot!"

"Yes, it's hot!"

"Let's get out of it! Come upstairs, kid! I got a nice little room. It's cool up there!"

He stirred uneasily. "I ought to get back to my ship! . . ."

"Gee, you don't want to go yet!"

She pressed herself closer to him so that he should

not get up, and then rubbed her perfumed hair in his face.

"You want me?" she said in a whisper.

He did not answer.

"Come upstairs with me. I'll treat you good!"

She kissed him, and as she did so he felt his blood racing through his head. He kissed her as fiercely as she had kissed him, and leant forward as if he meant to lift her in his arms, but she stood up briskly, for she knew that he had become obedient to her, and taking hold of his hand pulled him to his feet. "Come on, honey," she said, and led him to the door. He followed her, his face flushed and his temples throbbing.

She ran up the stairs, and he stumbled after her. Her room was a little way along the passage, and she hurried towards it and turned on the light. He heard footsteps following him and, looking round, saw the negress.

"Come in, kid," Clara called to him, and he entered the room. The negress followed him.

"Pay her for the room," Clara said, and the negress held out her hand for the money. "An' give her a dollar for herself." He did what she told him. "Bring up some more whisky!" she added, speaking to the negress. "I'm so thirsty, I could drink a distillery! Gee, kid, you look frightened!"

The negress left the room, but soon returned with the drink, for which Robert paid her. Then she left the door, smiling at them.

Robert sat down in a chair, while Clara mixed the liquor. His head was aching now, and he eagerly drank down the whisky hoping that it

would ease his pain. He lay back and closed his burning eyes. God, how awful it was that he should be here in this room, paying money to that horrible black hag. If only he had gone back to his ship! . . .

"Say, sweetie, ain't you gonna get ready?" he heard Clara saying.

He opened his eyes and saw her clothed only in a short pink chemise and her stockings. She drank some of the whisky and made him drink some too, and then pirouetted round the room.

"Do you like this life?" he asked when he had taken off his coat and collar.

She stopped dead and stared at him. "God," she said, "you ain't one of them guys that has a girl and then starts preachin' sermons over her!"

"No, only . . . !"

"Well, don't begin, honey. Don't start tellin' me about hell while you're huggin' me. I ain't no worse'n you. You got to have girls, ain't you? Well, then!" She paused for a moment, and then continued, "A fella used to come here once—he don't come no more—lapped up too much booze, an' died—kind of educated he was—taught in college! Gee, he knew a bit, that guy! He proved to me us women does good in the world. Some fella, a philassifer he was, writ a book provin' that if it wasn't for us, no good women couldn't walk out after dark, an' mebbe not before it! Well, I guess that'll get us off on the Last Day! But the good women ain't grateful any! God, no! Though if it wasn't for us, mebbe they wouldn't be feelin' so

good! I guess God'll have somepin to say about that when Gabriel blows his bugle!"

She took a deep breath, and then, forgetting her irritation, ran across the room. "Hurry, honey!" she said. He drank what remained of his whisky, and then climbed in beside her. "Gee, I like you!" she said, throwing her arms round him, and pulling him towards her.

VII

He rose with a feeling of shame and stood for a moment looking at her. Her passion had astonished and startled him. He had always thought of prostitutes as passive women, submitting to be used by casual men for money, and he imagined that most of them were either trapped into prostitution or fell into it after they had been betrayed by some lover. But this girl was wild. It was he who had risen first, not she, and when he had mumbled: "You like this?" she had firmly whispered back, "Yes!" and he knew that neither he nor any other man could ever satisfy her. She was a prostitute because she liked being a prostitute. His own passion had ebbed, but as he stood and looked at Clara, with her body curled up, and saw her flushed, smiling face, he knew that the tide of her passion was swelling! He wondered what the time was, and fumbled in his clothes for his watch. An hour! That was all! He seemed to have been there for an interminable time, yet he had been with her for no more than an hour. His eyes felt tired, and his head ached horribly. She turned and watched him

as he drew his hand across his forehead, and rubbed his eyes.

"What's wrong, honey?" she said.

"Headache!" he answered.

She sat up and took hold of him.

"Gee, I'm sorry," she said. "Punchin' Matt maybe took it out of you!"

He leant his face against her. She wasn't a bad sort of a girl. Kind, anyway! She couldn't help it if she was made that way. Anyhow, she was kind. He liked the feel of her face, and the way her arms curled round his neck. His eyes closed, and his head dropped on to her shoulder. If only he did not feel so ashamed of himself! She shook him sharply.

"Say, sweetie, you gotta go!" she said.

He sat upright and yawned. "What's that?" he murmured.

"You gotta go now!"

She jumped up. "I suppose you don't want to stay all night, do you?"

He shook his head. "No," he answered. "I've got to get back to my ship!"

He stood up, and as he did so, his head ached so violently that he felt as if it were being torn open. "God, my head!" he said.

She seized the whisky bottle and mixed a drink for him. "Here," she said, "get that down your neck. It'll do you good!"

He swallowed it so quickly that he began to choke. "Come on, honey! Hurry!" she said.

"What's the hurry about?" he replied.

"Don't be stoopid, honey!" she said. "I can't sit here all night, talkin' intellectual stuff! I gotta go downstairs again!"

His shame overwhelmed him. "Get another . . . !" he began.

"Why, yes, of course, stoopid!" She was going out but turned back as she spoke.

"Oh, God!" he exclaimed, sitting down once more.

The look of anger came on to her face again. "Don't start that stuff!" she said. "I don't stand for no sermons, honey. Oh, hell, no."

"I wasn't going to say anything . . . !"

"Yes, honey, you was. I know the signs. You ain't the first guy's been here an' you ain't gonna be the last, so don't start the fallen sister stuff on me! You've had your fun, an' now you wanna feel all good an' nice. But you ain't gonna do no rescue the perishin' here, honey. If I'm your fallen sister, you're my fallen brother, an' I guess all the sin's kinda in the family! Come on, kid! Gee, I'm losin' time!"

He seized her by the arms and drew her towards him.

"I'm sorry about this, Clara! I'm not preachin' at you. I've no call to preach to you, but I feel 'shamed!"

Her voice became kinder. "I know," she said. "Lots feel like that after they've had a girl, but it don't stop them from havin' more."

"Clara, I'll marry you if you'll take me!"

She drew herself away from him. "Marry me!" She laughed.

"Yes, as soon as you like!"

"Well, I reckon you're the first fella ever said that to me, but, kid, don't be stoopid! I ain't complainin' none. This is business, this is! I ain't got no secret sorrow. If I was to marry you—what did you say your name was?"

"Robert!"

"I can't remember half the guys' names! If I was to marry you, Robert, I'd break your heart, an' I'd be back in here in a month. This is where I belong! Come on, kid! Don't keep a girl waitin' half the night while you get ready!"

He stood up, angry and resentful. "You're in a hell of a hurry," he said.

"Well, ain't it what I'm here for?" she replied.

He did not answer, but turned to leave.

"Don't go and be sore," she said, when he was ready to go. "Gee, Robert, I like you better'n most." She hauled his head down so that she could kiss him. "You come an' see me again soon. Ask for me whenever you come to 'Frisco. I'll treat you good."

He felt in his pocket for the roll of dollar bills that Antonio had given him. "Here," he said, offering them to her, "take these!"

"You ain't a bad guy," she said, looking at the roll, "but I guess you've paid me fair."

"Take them!" he insisted.

"No, not all of them, but I'll take these an' buy myself a little souvenir of you, Robert!"

She took two ten-dollar bills, and made him replace the roll in his pocket. "An' don't you go showin'

that money about careless. San Francisco ain't a healthy place for a man with money. Are you ready, honey?"

"Yes."

"Well, good-night, honey, an' don't forget to come an' see me some time!"

She kissed him again, and then opened the bedroom door and gently pushed him out. He stood hesitating in the passage for a moment until he saw that the negress was standing at the top of the stairs watching him. She grinned affably at him. "You had good time?" she drawled at him.

"Go to hell," he said.

"Awright!" she answered, running down the stairs before him.

She opened the door of the room in which he had left Antonio, and immediately afterwards Antonio came into the hall and greeted Robert. "I waita for you," he said. "You staya long timea wit' Clara! Quite right! She is ver' dam' gooda girl! But I waita for you. Come in!"

"No, thanks. I've had all the company I want to-night!"

"But a leetle time, you will come. No? To say gooda nighta to de girls, yes! Dey are all gooda girls in dis house, as gooda as each other. I know. I have had all of dem!"

"You know, Mr. Sapolio, I've taken a quare scunner again you!" Robert found the Ulster words suddenly crowding on to his tongue.

"Scunner!" Antonio repeated in a bewildered manner.

"Aye! That's a word you've mebbe not heard afore,

but it's a dam' good word, an' it just means what I feel about you. Man, dear, I hate the sight of you, with your greasy oul' face an' your big wobblin' belly. I don't know whether you've got the drift of my remarks or not, but what I want you to understand is that if you were to drop down dead fornenst me, I wouldn't shed a tear over your corp!"

"You insulta me . . . !"

"Aye, that's what I'm tryin' to do, an' thank God, I seem to have done it! Is that the front door there?"

Antonio turned back to the room. "I not letta myself be insulta!" he said. "Matt! Joe!" he called inside the room.

Robert made for the front door as fast as he could and tried to open it, but it was locked. "Holy O!" he said to himself. "I'm in for it now!"

Antonio returned, followed by the man whom he called Joe and Matt, the boxer whom Robert had knocked out. "I t'ink you knowa him!" he said to Matt, pointing to Robert.

"Know him!" Matt roared in a thick southern Irish accent. "I'd know him a mile off! That was a dam' dirty blow you hit me, young fella!"

Robert did not reply. He glanced about the passage, looking for a way of escape or of defence, but could see none. In the doorway of the room from which Matt had just emerged three of the prostitutes were standing, apprehensively watching the men. The negress, still grinning affably, stood at the foot of the stairs, at the head of which Robert could now see Clara gazing down on him in agitation.

"A dam' dirty blow!" Matt shouted.

"It was a fair blow, you Papish you!" Robert

answered. "A good Or'ngeman's blow, an' it knocked the sense out of you!"

"Don'ta you letta him talka, Matt!" said the Italian. "He gotta my money . . . !"

"Well, I earned it, didn't I?" Robert interrupted. "I stretched that Papish senseless on the floor, didn't I?"

"I not talka to you! Matt, you talka to him right!"

Matt advanced a few paces towards Robert. "You gimme them dollars," he said.

"If you come any nearer, I'll land you one on the same spot," Robert replied. "An' this time I'll not charge you nothin' for doin' it!"

Matt let a roar of rage out of him, and lowering his head, rushed in on Robert who hit out at him, but missed him. Then Matt was on him, and Joe, too. He felt himself falling and as he fell, he heard screams and was conscious of the prostitutes rushing back to the room where the piano was, while Clara ran down the stairs but was held back by the negress. Then his face seemed to break, and he heard and saw no more.

VIII

He was lying at the bottom of a boat when he recovered consciousness, but he was too dazed and silly to remember what had happened to him or to do any more than lie back and close his eyes. Presently he felt himself being lifted from the boat and, as if he were remembering something that had happened long ago, he knew that he was being helped on board a ship. He was dragged across the deck and thrown into the

forecastle, where he lay half sensible and half senseless. He was aware of other men being dragged into the forecastle and flung down on the floor beside him, and he heard, without quite comprehending, some one say, "They's the drunkest lot of toughs I've ever handled, but they's all good men!" Then he heard no more, except occasional grunts and snores from the men lying beside him. After a long, long while, the door of the forecastle was opened, and two officers came in and began to lay about them. "Now, then, you drunken swine, get a move on! Do you think you can lie here for ever?" He staggered to his feet and put his hands to his head. There was some mistake here. This was not his ship. He did not know these officers. His ship was the *American Star!* The officers, having roused several of the men, suddenly became silent as they stooped over one still lying on the floor. One of them straightened himself.

"By God!" he said, "that dam' crimp's done us! This bastard's dead!"

"Stiff!" said the other.

"This'll make the old man curse a bit! Did you see them bring this chap on board?"

"Yes, but I thought he was drunk, too, like the rest of 'em. They were all paralytic an' had to be dam' near carried on!"

"Fancy us gettin' landed with a stiff! The old man'll blister Joe when we get back to 'Frisco!"

"What'll we do with him?"

"Oh, leave him there 'til the old man's had a look at him. Then we'll shove him overboard. Fancy us gettin' landed with a dead 'un! God, but the old man'll

be wild! Now, then, the rest of you, stir your stumps. You're still alive enough anyhow. You, there," he shouted at Robert, "don't sit there holdin' your dam' head! Get a move on!"

And so, once more, the routine of the sea began.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

I

THEY sailed down the Pacific in fair weather, though occasionally they had hard days and nights when squall after squall came up and held them to the halliards for long spells. The food was bad and it was vilely cooked—a mess of dirty grease and lumps of sickening fat with shreds of meat attached to them. They almost lived on pea-soup that was nearly black because the cook was too lazy to wash the peas, but occasionally they caught albacore and bonita that helped make their meals tolerable. Robert, who had been chosen for the second mate's watch, was disinclined to make friends with his comrades, although he found two Etonians among them who made him remember Charlie and would, had he wished, have chummed with him. But he had lost his feeling for friendship and was content to be civil and to do his work. The other members of the crew were as assorted as he had found crews on other ships; an Arab, a Peruvian, several Swedes and Americans, a German or two, a Greek, an Irishman who was too old to be at sea at all, a Scotsman and several Englishmen, and a couple of hobos, one of them a Canadian, who had never been to sea before and had joined the ship in the belief that a sailor's life was even softer than a hobo's and much more certain in its comforts! Two days after the

Golden North had sailed out of 'Frisco Bay, the hobos had completely changed their opinion about seafaring. None of the men greatly interested Robert at first. A sense of disgust filled him when he thought of the way in which he had become their comrade in this ship. Shanghaied! Brought aboard in a half-conscious state with men who were dead drunk and thrown into the forecastle like a log! Well, that was common enough in the life of sailors and would continue, no doubt, to be common. He had to go to sea on some ship, and the *Golden North* was probably as good as any other was likely to be. What did anything matter, anyway! Charlie was dead, and he had been carried, seemingly stupid with drink, out of a 'Frisco whore-house and dumped in a boat with half-a-dozen shanghaied sailors and a corpse. Pretty! . . . Only one thing seemed important to him now, that he should return to 'Frisco and find Antonio and his friend, Joe, and that big boxing bastard Matt, and give them something by which to remember him for the rest of their lives. He could scarcely contain himself when he learned that the *Golden North* would not return to California for nearly a year. She was bound now for Liverpool, where she was to receive orders that might take her heaven knew where!

II

They drove steadily down to the doldrums, into hot, steamy weather and varying winds and frequent falls of rain that sometimes came on them suddenly and soaked them before they could get their oilskins on, but their bad fortune did not last long, for they soon caught the South-east trades and went sailing to the

south before fresh breezes in warm weather, with scarcely any necessity to touch a brace or make a tack; and they crossed the line in moonlight, while little white clouds raced across the starry sky. The *Golden North* was a good goer, and she made a lovely sight as she shifted before the humming trades with her lee scuppers in the water. Robert sometimes crawled out on to the bowsprit and lay looking at her beautiful spread of sail straining from the yards, and while he lay his sense of rapture returned to him, and he found himself again in love with a ship. He listened to her spars creaking and heard the canvas whipping the wind and felt the spray beating against his face, as it leapt off the sea and struck against the ship's sides—and his heart filled. Whatever illusions he had had about a sailor's life were gone now. The romantic legends which caused landsmen to believe that it somehow ennobled those who led it no longer deceived him. He had seen too much of the brutality of life at sea to hold any illusions of that sort, and he knew now that captains and mates were nearly always men of foul temper, greedy and harsh and tyrannical, but his knowledge did not discourage him from his love of ships, and now, lying in the sunshine on the bowsprit and regarding the ship's great spread, he knew that he was a sailor, and must for ever be a sailor. Charlie had said to him, while they were beating round the Horn, "You'll remember the soft days in the Pacific longer than you'll remember this!" Anyhow, he felt fit and hard. When he looked at his hands, he saw that they were as tough as hide and he knew that his muscles were like steel. The rare times when he could lie for a while in the sunshine and feel the wind blowing through his hair

and hear the sea scudding past the ship were extraordinarily delicious to him, but he enjoyed, too, the rough days when the wind tore the sails from his bleeding hands and the sea flung itself across the deck as if it were determined to drown him. When a black squall suddenly came up and burst upon them, before they had time to roll up the sails, and the wind howled in the rigging and the rain filled the scuppers, he felt a painful exhilaration in himself as if he alone were opposing the elements and marvellously defeating them. He was not without terror on these occasions, but his terror stimulated him, and he came on deck from a fierce fight with thrashing sails that finally were clewed up, feeling like a soldier, bloody with his wounds, but victorious over his enemy. . . . He endured the wind and the rain and the bitter cold and the foul food and the frequent soakings with pride and forgot them when the warm days came or the wind, though cold, was fair. When the ship logged ten knots, sailing under a full spread, almost on her side with her lee rail dipping in the sea and her lee scuppers full of water, he was proud of her, and when she bounded through the sea at fourteen knots, he loved her as if she belonged to him. After they had logged two hundred and thirty-two miles in twenty-four hours, he listened to Murphy, the old Irishman, who had the sailor's long memory for ships and their sailings, discoursing on the record runs of great clippers, how the *Red Jacket* ran from New York to Liverpool in exactly thirteen days, one hour and twenty-five minutes, and the *Thermopylae* cleared the Channel in less than forty-eight hours and dropped her anchor at Melbourne sixty days after she had weighed it at Gravesend!

"Them was the ships to sail," said the old man, who ought to have been taking his rest in a Home for Retired Sailors. "There's no ships these times like them ships. They think a ship that can do two hundred and thirty-two miles in twenty-four hours is a hell of a ship, but I tell you that's nothing at all to what the oul' clippers used to do. There was a ship I was on one time, a Scotch ship it was, that ran from Greenock to Queensland in sixty-nine days. She went from Queensland to San Francisco and then home again to Greenock an' the whole trip only took nine months an' thirty days. These dam' ships these days doesn't know what sailin' is!"

The old man's vanity was well-founded, but that fact did not diminish Robert's pride in the *Golden North* to which he had been brought in such ignominious circumstances. She could shift through the water, whatever old Murphy said, and all that she did was lovely in his eyes.

III

As they approached the Horn the weather became colder and harder. The wind strengthened and the spray flew more freely and waves fell on the deck with greater frequency. Cape pigeons and blackbirds and hens and mollymawks came wheeling and circling over their stern, where two big albatrosses, beautiful in their flight, had flown for nearly a week—seeming to sail, rather than to fly, down the wind with almost motionless wings. The albatrosses had been sighted too far north for the comfort of the men. "We'll stick our noses into dam' dirty weather further south," the second mate said to Robert, as they stood together gazing at

the beautiful birds, and his prophecy was a true one. The wind became chilly as ice and numbed their fingers as they fumbled with the sails. Heavy seas poured over the side and fell into the half-deck where Robert lived. The crew now wore their rubbers and oilskins continually, which had to be bought from the "slop-chest" by the shanghaied members of it, most of whom, including Robert, had come aboard with no dunnage at all. Sometimes, sodden and cold, Robert remembered the good dunnage he had left aboard the *American Star,* and when he remembered, his rage against Antonio and Matt and Joe deepened. Whatever happened to him from now on, he would somehow contrive to return to San Francisco and hammer hell out of those three. The further south they sailed, the worse the weather became, and the deck was continually flooded with foaming water. The crew were now always wet; they lay down in their bunks wet and rose up with steaming bodies to pull wet rubbers over wet socks and go out in the darkness to get soaked again. Robert, lying in a top bunk in the half-deck, woke from a sleep of exhaustion to find himself floating off it and in danger of drowning. Half-dazed with fatigue and lack of sleep he crawled back to his bunk and watched the water splashing backwards and forwards as the ship rolled in the trough of the sea until his eyes closed and he forgot his miseries. Then the watch below ended, and once more he was on deck. Great green seas, with heavy white heads, came racing after them and seemed as if they must fall upon them and make them founder, but just as the high, boiling waves reached it, the *Golden North* rose so that the seas split and roared past her sides, throwing a swirl of ice-cold

water on to the main-deck where it settled for a while and then fell back into the ocean. The crew had to run hard between waves to do their jobs and run even harder when a wave approached. The galley was awash, so there was nothing but hard-tack for the crew to eat. No hot tea or coffee to drink; no stoves by which to dry sopping clothes; no dry place in which to lie down and sleep. A mountain of water would leap at them, tearing at the ship's sides as if it meant to tear them apart, and those who failed to find something to which they could cling until it had poured away again, were flung violently into the lee scuppers, where they lay half-stunned by the weight of water that had fallen on them. The foul weather lasted for eight days and nights, during which time they lived on hard-tack, soaked in salt water, for the fresh-water pump could not be rigged. All of them were wounded and sore. Murphy, who was not able to elude the sudden seas that swept across the deck, had his knee split open and there were bad sea boils on his arms and wrists. Robert, like most of the others, was badly bruised. An enormous sea broke aboard while he was turning the gear up and swept him over the side! He held his breath and clung like a limpet to the end of a clew-line and presently he floated back again to safety. Scarcely had he done so than another big sea came pounding on to the deck. He leapt on to the fife-rail as it broke on them in time to see two of his mates washed from the main-hatch to the break of the poop, from which they were hauled, half-drowned, by others who were roaring with laughter. The men always laughed! . . .

But although the seas remained high and heavy and the ship was constantly pooped, the old man would not

heave to, but continued to fly before the storm, though some of the crew began to feel uneasy. In the watches below, while they listened to the waves thumping the main-deck and covering even the hatches with their hissing white water, they told each other dismal stories of ships that had foundered, with all hands, because the old man would not heave to, but persisted in running before the gale. The mates were as determined as the old man not to heave to, and the first mate, in a delusive lull, piled on more cloth so that the ship should move still faster, but only made the going harder for her. It was while she was rearing and plunging forward under the reefed topsails that she nearly foundered. Robert, terribly tired, and two other men had struggled with difficulty from the main-deck to the poop where they stood for a few moments regarding the tumbled sea, green and gray and white, and the torn sky, where the wet yellow beams of the setting sun flicked faint wisps of colour across the darkening clouds. They felt terribly alone. No sea-bird followed in their wake now. The world had shrunk to this little staggering ship that strove to keep herself alive in the continual presence of death. She groaned under her immense labour, while her rigging screamed with pain and her stays shrieked and shouted or moaned with fear. She rose and fell and rose again. The sea thumped her, and she shuddered with shock from the blow; the sea thumped her again, and she seemed to stand still and then to roll over as if she were about to collapse; but always she recovered herself and rode on, bruised and sore and tired but undaunted. Robert felt his love for her increasing. This gallantry in fierce trial stirred his heart and he wanted to kneel

down and kiss the deck of his darling ship! . . . Suddenly he heard a shout, and turning, saw coming towards the stern a high, hissing sea whose crest was a mass of white protruding tongues. Like a great green wall it came towards them, reaching higher and higher as it came until it seemed as if, when it fell on them, it would bury them.

"My God, we're going down this time!" some one cried above the noise, as all of them on the poop clung as tightly as they could to the rigging. It seemed to them that the battered boat could not rise above that wall of water. In a few moments they would be hurled down to their drowning! She tried to rise, and slowly heaved herself up, groaning and sobbing, as she strained against the sea, so that they felt that she would succeed in topping it. But the sea would not let her rise above it; it dragged at her heels and then, unable to haul her down, it fell upon the poop with a horrible thud and raced down on to the main-deck and made it like a cauldron full of boiling suds. The helmsman, clinging to his wheel, was almost smothered in water, and Robert and his mates were buried in it up to their waists. They could see nothing but a swirl of white water, from which bits of ship protruded, and could hear nothing but the roar and rattle of the wind and sea and the sickening sound of breaking wood. The *Golden North* staggered so that the following sea leaped on to her with ease and submerged Robert up to his neck. She seemed to be beaten. There seemed to be no more fight left in her. She had striven and had been defeated. There was little more that the sea could do to her; in a moment or two she would go down! She swung away from her course, and the helmsman and the second

mate struggled to heave the wheel up Robert ran to help them.

"This'll about finish us," the second mate shouted to him. "Another bucket of water, an' we'll sink!"

But she held. Very slowly she raised her head and shook the water from her.

"All the same, another drop'll drown us!" said the second mate.

A squall of hail fell on them as they splashed about the deck, salving lamps that had been washed from the locker, and then, as they did so, Robert saw another sea racing towards them, and he yelled to his comrades to run to the poop, which they reached only in time to escape from this new danger. But the *Golden North* did not go down. She straightened herself and stumbled on. The old man came on deck and glancing quickly round him, gave the order to heave to. All hands were called, and in a few moments were busy hauling and bracing. Another sea broke over them, hurling them on to the deck, where they struggled in the water until it poured away, and they were able to jump again to their jobs. They were ordered aloft, and as they rushed into the shrouds, the ship rolled over until they were submerged in the sea. They held on while she righted herself and then they went on up to the yard, though they could not see, and the hailstones hit them and cut them. Their fingers seemed to freeze on their hands and they could scarcely feel the stiffened sail to pick it up, though the blood flowed from their nails as they struggled to stow. At last, half dead with cold and fatigue, they finished the job and prepared to ease away the sheet. They had to clear blocks that were jammed and unravel twisted buntlines,

while every now and then sea-wash swept over them, so that they lost their balance and fell against each other, or on to their backs. But they hauled the sail up, though the icy wind seemed as if it would cut the hearts out of them. They flew to the braces and fixed the foreyards, though a mass of black water fell on them while they worked. Backwards and forwards they went hauling and hanging on, and then they went aloft to furl the foresail. There was still the main lower topsail to haul and furl, and while they hauled it, they were up to their waists in water with intervals when they were completely submerged, and while they furled it, a great sea drove down upon the ship and bent her over until her lower yard-arms were dipping into the broken water, and the main lower-topsail yard stood up like a mast to which the helpless seamen clung.

"She's going over!" one yelled, and Robert, hearing a wild shriek from the Arab, reached out and caught hold of him as he was about to fall into the sea. They could hear the second mate shouting to them to tie up the sail and get a move on, and, like men in a dream, they turned to obey him. The ship still heeled over, and was almost on her beam-ends. The decks had disappeared, hidden by a thick curtain of spray and white broken water! Well, this was the end! They had done their best for their ship, and she had done her best for them, and now she and they were about to drown! They waited for her to fall over on her side and sink, but she paused and remained steady, and, in a lull, they saw the deck again. They came down through thick, icy-cold spray to wait for the end that they felt had been deferred for a little while. She was now lying hove-to,

and there was no more to be done. Robert's watch was sent below for a short rest, while the port-watch went on to the poop. They crawled to their bunks, soaked and frozen, and lay down as best they could in their wet beds, and while they lay there, half asleep, they heard a loud cracking sound as the sheet carried away! All that night, the storm howled at them and seas smashed over them and hail squalls burst upon them, cutting their faces so that the blood came! . . .

IV

Eight weeks after they sailed from San Francisco they passed the high black Horn, and were badly beaten off Staten Island and the Falklands. Robert was nearly killed by a huge sea which suddenly rose up and fell on the watch, hurling them all over the deck. The great pile of water turned Robert upside down and threw him violently against the main-hatch, banging his knee against a ring-bolt until he felt that it would break. He could not get his head above the water and he held his breath while the sea rolled off him. It threw him about like a piece of stick, head up, then heels up, and beat him against the hatch and the fife-rail and then pitched him into the scuppers. He gulped for breath and swallowed some of the sea! . . . What he had borne before was light compared with this. There could be no suffering on the sea more terrible than this! . . . The water ran off and he sat up, blinking and gasping and looked about him. Several of the watch were lying in the scuppers, and others were entangled in the fife-rail or lying prone beneath the break of the poop. Perhaps they were dead! . . .

The second mate did not think so. "Come on, come on," he shouted. "Get a damned move on!"

Three of the men, including old Murphy, were nearly finished, and Robert could scarcely move because of the pain in his knee. But they squared the yards, though seas continually broke over them.

The pain in Robert's knee increased and the joint became so swollen that he could not walk, and he had to lie off duty on deck and do light work. He lay on the half-deck, unable to sleep because of his aching leg, and watched the wreckage floating on the flooded floor.

" 'A life on the ocean wave,' as the song says," he said to himself.

V

The voyage continued in that manner. Storms beat upon them, straining all their manhood, and tropical heat tried their tempers until a time came when each man in the crew had quarrelled with all his comrades and was ready, on slight provocation, to fight and even to kill. The food became fouler, great greasy lumps of red fat and dirty, flavourless pea-soup, and most of the men developed boils on their bodies. One man, who had cut his thumb badly before the Horn was rounded, now went about with his hand plainly rotting and smelling terribly. The heat as they came to the Equator was almost unbearable during the deck-scrubbing and they sighed for temperate weather. The nights were lovely with stars and phosphorescent waves and summer lightning, but the days were hard to endure. They could not walk on their bare feet because the deck burned them, and when they ran into the

doldrums, and the wind died away, they found themselves continually working to catch the faintest air. They were set to oiling the decks and painting the ship, though some of them were suffering from cramp in the stomach caused by drinking foul water, and their illness and the heat smashed their tempers. Fights were frequent, and once a half-crazy Swede tried to knife the Arab. The ship had a foul bottom and she steered badly, and few of the crew could hold her to her course. Robert, whose knee was steadily recovering, was given more tricks at the wheel than his comrades because he knew how to steer and could keep her to her course.

They picked up the trades and began to move quickly again. In the middle of December they ran into heavy head seas and once again great waves fell on the decks and soaked their clothes. They had to heave-to off the coast of Spain, with great masses of weather water pouring over their bulwarks, which worried the experienced sailors to whom lee-water was of no consequence. Then came a dead calm, followed by a pretty breeze and a fierce Atlantic gale that nearly took three of the crew over the side and was as bad as anything they had had to endure in the Pacific. Christmas Day was spent in the Irish Sea, and two days later they berthed in the Mersey. A fortnight later, learning that the *Golden North's* next trip would take her to Melbourne, Robert joined the crew of the *Firefly* and set sail for San Francisco.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

I

SHE was a pretty ship, prettier than the *Golden North,* well-built and well-found, and her captain, Redpath, was the finest old man that Robert had yet encountered. She went down to the doldrums like a bird and rode into the hard seas off the Horn as if she liked them. She rounded the big black rock and ran up the Pacific as if she were trying to break the record, and so well was she handled that she seemed as if she would not only break it, but make one that could never be broken by any sailing-ship. Robert was happier in his shipmates than he had been since Charlie died. One of the dagoes was a miserably mean fellow—it was he who brought disaster upon the ship—but the rest were likeable men. The depression that had settled upon Robert and manifested itself most in the watches below now lifted, and he found himself yarning and listening to yarns, and singing sea-songs as eagerly and heartily as any of the others. The trip was so swift that he hoped to land in 'Frisco a month sooner than he should have done if he had remained on the *Golden North,* and she had headed for home. He cheered himself with the thought that he would walk in on Antonio without warning and knock the head off him. Antonio must be the first to be punished—Joe and Matt could wait until Antonio had been punched black and blue. "If I have

to stay in 'Frisco 'til I'm bald an' blue, I'll tear the heart out of that fella," he said to himself.

II

And then one morning early, when they had crossed the Equator, and were lying in a dead calm and terrific heat, the dago who brought disaster to them disobeyed orders and entered the booby-hatch with a naked light, and in a little while the *Firefly* was in flames and burning like paper. The old man stood for a few seconds, stunned by the sight, and then, seeing that it was useless to fight the fire, that, indeed, there was barely time to get away, ordered the long-boat and the two quarters to be launched. The crew, scared by this sudden calamity, worked in such a hurry that they drove an oar through the side of one of the boats and stove a hole in another. They worked harder than any of them had ever worked before, but the fire worked harder than they did, and they were compelled to shove off from the ship with only ten days' rations apiece for each boat. Robert and twelve of the men went in the long-boat with the captain, and the rest of the crew were divided between the two quarter-boats, with the chief mate in charge of one and the second mate in charge of the other. All their clothes, barring their overcoats, were on their backs. A horrible sense of solitude and impotence settled upon them. There was very little room in the boats, because of the space occupied by rations and water, and the men in the quarter-boats had the additional misery of leaks. Half of them spent their time in bailing the boats, while the rest bunged up holes as best they could. The long-boat was only

twenty-one feet in length, six feet in width and three in depth, and in that little space, fourteen men had to live and work and sleep and find room for food and water.

They drew away from the burning ship and reckoned up their chances of survival while they divided the rations and stopped the leaks. The old man told them that they were a long distance from any land and that they must be sparely rationed from the start. There was grumbling at that among the dagoes, one of whom was threatened with drowning when he was found stealing some of the food. The rest of the men accepted the old man's order because they had learned to trust his judgment. Each man was given half a ship's biscuit for breakfast, a biscuit and some tinned meat for dinner, and half a biscuit for tea. He had a small sup of water with each meal! When these details were settled, the boats stood by while the *Firefly* burned. There was a chance that the glare of her flames might attract some ship to their rescue, but they loitered by her not only for that reason. They felt a grief at her end, and were unwilling to leave her until she sank. They lay on their oars and watched the smoke and flames rising from her. They could hear her timbers cracking, and every now and then a burning timber would fall into the sea and turn black in the water. Pieces of wreckage drifted round the boats, blackened and charred. No one spoke. Their minds were occupied with the dying ship. The old man sat in the stern of the long-boat with his eyes rigidly fixed on the *Firefly,* but he gave no sign of what he thought or felt, except that twice his lips twitched! . . . She took a long time to burn down to the water, and they lay all night on their oars,

hungry and tired and half asleep, watching her. The flames flickered on the dark masses of the night and flashed their reflections from the sea, while the quiet water lapped the ship's sides and made little sucking noises under the boats. Then just as the black clouds began to splinter and the dawn to appear, the *Firefly* suddenly pitched over and sank into the sea. They had waited all night for her death, knowing that it must come at any moment, but when it came, it seemed to them brutally abrupt, and they shivered apprehensively in the darkness that seemed to deepen immediately after she went down. She blazed up so brightly as she reeled over on her side that, although the sun was rising when she drowned, there seemed to be no light when her flames were quenched by the sea. The old man did not move. He sat in the stern still gazing at the place where the *Firefly* had been and only black bubbles now were. Some of the men were crying, but not all of their tears were fraught with fear! . . . They still did not move, but rested on their oars as if they thought that she might emerge from the water. The heavens cleared, and the sun made the sea gay with colour. Nothing now remained of the *Firefly* but some charred timbers and three boats full of forlorn men! . . . They turned towards the old man, as if each of them had received an order to do so.

"We'll make for the north," he said, without looking at any of them, for there was scarcely any hope in his heart. They were lying in the middle of the Pacific, a thousand miles from any place and with almost no likelihood of meeting a ship or reaching land. They were lying in the doldrums, and still had five hundred miles of them to travel! . . .

III

It seemed to Robert that they would do better to eat what food there was and then drop over the sides of the boat. What was the use of contending with Death when Death had the upper hand of them? But when he glanced at the old man's set face his despair dropped from him. Even if Death got them, they must fight for their possession. The old man set the course and then, taking the quarter-boats in tow, they made what way they could to the north. That night they had luck. Rain fell in torrents, soaking them to the skin and filling the water-tubs. Water was more important than food. They could live without food for a longer time than they could live without water. Robert was called to the tiller to relieve the captain when he was tired, and they were slightly separated from the rest of the crew, for he maintained ship's discipline as far as he was able, but sleeping was not comfortable for any of them, for they had no room in which to stretch their legs. It seemed to Robert then that there could be no greater pleasure than to be able to lie down at full length! The morning was rough and wet, with a big cobbling sea, through which they toiled with difficulty and trouble. The men slept and so did Robert, when chances came, but the old man did not close his eyes until the fourth night they were out, and then his sleep was fitful and short. His unquenchable spirit and his unsleeping mind and tireless heart took them, in their three-feet deep boat, loaded down with men and provisions, through the heavy seas that tried to swamp them. On the fourth day, the wind dropped dead and the sea fell, and the sun came up in a blistering heat. They put

out their oars, and some of them tried, but failed, to catch dolphins. The oars creaked horribly in the rowlocks. As the sun's rays mercilessly shone on them, and their backs ached with the agony of bending, the sound of the creaking oars seemed incessant and maddening. Creak, creak, *creeak!*

Six days passed in that fashion—with half a biscuit for breakfast, a biscuit and a half and a little tinned meat for dinner, and half a biscuit for tea, and a small sup of water! Sometimes they caught a dolphin that eked out their rations with tasty eating. They made three hundred miles in those six days, drifting in the calms and suffering terribly in the heat. They began to feel desperate. Whatever excitement any of them might have felt at being wrecked and lost in the Pacific was gone now and in its place was only dread. The men in the third boat, commanded by the second mate, who had no authority over them, had eaten up their rations of tinned meat, and were grumbling now because the other men had not eaten up theirs, so the men in the long-boat and the first quarter-boat passed some of their meat over to them. Then the boats moved on. They lost some of their making on the following day, and their distress was turned to anger by another complaint from the third boat. They were short of water, having exceeded their ration! . . .

It was then that the old man broke. He stood up in the long-boat, and said words to the second mate's crew that blistered them! . . .

IV

All this time they were in the doldrums. Scorching

sun was succeeded by pitch blackness and thunder and lightning and wind and rain. They were hungry before they received their rations, and hungrier after they had eaten them, but their hunger was nothing to their thirst and insomnia. Robert's tongue stuck to his mouth, and his eyes felt as if they were on fire. Their sole comfort was the rain, which, though it soaked them, quenched their thirst and refreshed them and filled their water-tubs. Several times they imagined that they saw a ship, but each time the ship turned into a cloud on the horizon. Once, at night, a man declared that he had seen a ship's lantern swinging ahead of them, and they stood up holding their breath and straining their eyes against the darkness until they saw that the lantern was a rising star! . . . It was after that disappointment that the old man reduced their rations. Each man received a quarter of a biscuit per meal, and half a pint of water. Ten days after the *Firefly* had sunk, another thunderstorm broke over them and they began to realise that they were making very little way to the north and might have to separate the boats. Towing the quarters was heavy, hampering work for the long-boat, and their provisions were dwindling! But they did nothing and said nothing then. Following the thunderstorm came a day and a night of light, variable winds and little progress—and something that set their hearts trembling and tingling with hope. A landbird perched on the yard of the long-boat! They sat back and gaped at the bird, preening itself so indifferently, and wondered whether their reckoning might not be wrong and land much nearer than they had imagined. Perhaps their drift to the north had been greater than the captain had calculated. Safety might be close at hand! . . .

No bird ever put heart into man as that forlorn bird, blown from its course, put heart into them, and their tired eyes sparkled as they sat and gazed at it. Then it unfolded its wings and flew away, and as it flew, their hope seemed to fly with it and they felt as sorrowful and abandoned as they were when the *Firefly* fell over on her side and dropped into the sea! . . . . They sat as still as they had sat then, until the rain began to fall, and then, dully and desperately, they turned again to their task. The days that immediately followed were full of rain and squalls and thunder and lightning. Food became less and less. Sometimes, but rarely, they caught a bonita! . . . At last, as they were visibly weakening, the old man told them that they must separate. He called to the first and second mates that one of them would have to fend for himself; the long-boat could not continue to tow them both. His men were tired! . . . The second lost any nerve that he had left from his futile attempts to control his crew and whined about desertion, and the first mate, who had as much courage as the captain, volunteered to cast off, and he and eight of the men took the second mate's boat and drew away. At sunset they had disappeared!

They had now been in the boats for a fortnight. Captain Redpath kept a log—for he was a seaman in the very marrow of his bones—and although he had less food and sleep than any one else, sternly maintained the discipline of a well-found and regulated ship. They took watches: he had a sort of bridge-deck, and every day he entered up his log. Soon after they had separated from the first mate and his eight men, they ran into the trade-winds and were quit of the doldrums.

They caught a few boobies—birds that were all feathers and a mouthful of meat—and ate them as eagerly as if they were milk-fed chickens. Their course was set for the north-west in the hope that they would strike one of the islands that dot the Pacific or get picked up by a ship, but even when they proclaimed their hope, they knew in their hearts that it was a poor one. Nothing came of it, except a brief and delusive joy, for two mornings after they had parted from their comrades, they saw a sail! Instantly their spirits recovered, and, whooping bravely, the long-boat cut itself adrift from the second's quarter-boat and started off to hail it. They were saved. The men in the quarter-boat thankfully lay back to wait for their rescuers to come to them, while those in the long-boat stirred themselves manfully to get to the shining sail. Life marvellously had returned to them, and they laughed, and talked as if they were entering harbour after a long, windy, wet voyage! But the sail belonged to the first mate's boat. They had separated and encountered again! Their disappointment cockled all of them up—except the old man, who did not speak, but made an entry in his log. The men sat limply in the boat. Despair closed down on them now more oppressively than before. What was the good of going on? The wind was against them and it was idle to expect to strike one of the islands. There was a small chance of a passing ship, but it was too small to restore their spirits to them. They were merely prolonging their misery. They sank into a despond from which it was hard for the old man to draw them. But his orders came crisply. The long-boat had to be baled, for the hole that had been knocked in her side when she was launched had

not been properly repaired. He started some of the men on baling her. Then another decision to separate had to be made. The first mate and his men had chanced their luck and now the second mate and his men must chance theirs! . . . A clamour rose from the men of the quarter-boat when they knew that they too must fend for themselves, and they tried to climb into the long-boat. But there was no room in the long-boat and they were forced to sheer off! . . . Robert and his comrades did not speak while the old man gave his orders. They did what they were told to do, though obedience was not easy to give. But they knew that there was little likelihood that any of them would reach the land. Each boat had to take what chance it could find! . . .

The crew of the long-boat never saw the second's crew again, nor did they ever again see the first mate's crew.

V

The final separation was followed for those in the long-boat by monotonous days of hunger and thirst and suffering. They were terribly weak, for their rations were small and less frequent. When they caught a booby-bird or a flying-fish, they had to eat it raw. Their despondency was become permanent, and they rarely spoke to each other, but sailed in silence, brooding deeply and feverishly. Their meals were reduced to two a day and each man's ration of biscuit was about the size of a penny. At the end of the first month, ten rations of water and a morsel of bread were left. The seas were rough again, and the men sat huddled together in their soaked clothes. They ate the last

piece of bread thirty-two days after disaster had befallen them, and now great trouble came upon them; the hungry, half-delirious men discovered grievances and made complaints about unfair division of food. They were down to a meal and three sips of water a day. They grumbled at the old man, and blamed him for their trouble. They said he had not tried to save the *Firefly* or to stow enough provisions in the boats. They said, with angry glances at Robert, that he was favouring people! . . . They were not quite right in their heads, and when one of them suddenly staggered to his feet and pitched himself into the sea, they scarcely looked up to observe what he had done. One less to feed! . . . A man lying near to Robert began to babble about meals he had eaten in Marseilles, and suddenly Robert found himself remembering meals he had eaten at home. His memory was full of pictures of the kitchen at the top of the stairs behind his mother's shop. He saw it on the busy Saturday nights, when the shop was full of customers. He loved it more on that night than on any other, for then it was dark and quiet, except for the red glow of the fire and the sound of the Sunday broth boiling in the big oval pot resting on the hob. He would steal in from the crowded street through the shop where a dozen or more persons were striving to get served by his mother and Margaret, and climb up to the little kitchen and listen to the bubbling of the boiling broth. It had to boil slowly and for a long while, and so it was possible for his mother and Margaret to leave the pot unattended while they served in the shop. Lying now in the long-boat he recollected how it was made and could almost smell its savoury odour. This was how it was made. If the man would

stop talking about the food he got at Marseilles, Robert would tell him how broth was made. He had often watched his mother making it, and, listen, this is how she made it. She put water in the big pot and piles of chopped cabbage and turnips and carrots and fistfuls of barley and a piece of pork—a pig's knee, perhaps—or mebbe a piece of beef. And she let it boil until the smell of it was lovely. That was how it was made. Great stuff it was, a meal by itself, and it was their Sunday dinner, all the years he could remember. He could talk 'til he was tired about the food and drink he got in Marseilles, but let him tell him that he never in the whole of his puff got anything to eat or drink that was as good as broth. The English, a wasteful, thriftless people, gave you a spoonful of tasteless dishwater, which they called gravy-soup, or tepid water with a grain or two of barley floating in it which they called vegetable broth! . . . His mother told him once that God would surely punish the English for the way they wasted food. They threw away good bones instead of making nourishing stock for soup out of them. Wasn't that wicked? (My God, what would they not give now for some of the stuff the English wasted!) But quit talking about Marseilles and listen 'til I tell you about the broth. It was boiled on a Saturday night so that there might be as little labour on Sunday as possible. That was religion, but being a blasted dago he would not understand that! Religion! Yes, that was what it was. Yes, his mother and everybody in Belfast or any other place that *was* a place and not a God-damned hole full of dagoes, believed that if a person was to boil their broth on a Sunday when they could have boiled it on a Saturday

God would be angry and might send them to hell. Did he understand now what religion was? Well, listen, then, and quit asking questions while Robert told him about the broth. Sometimes, in a lull of traffic in the shop Margaret would run up the stairs to the wee kitchen—well, *little* kitchen, then—to stir the pot and see that the broth was not boiling too quickly, and if she found him there she would say, "Would you like to taste a bowl of it, son?" No, no, he was not her son—her brother—that was only a way grown-up people in Ulster sometimes had of talking to young lads. And he would say, "Yes, if you please, Maggie!" and then she would take a bowl out of the cupboard and ladle some of the hot broth into it and set it on the table before him, and at once, without a word of grace, he would begin to sup the broth. That was part of the fun. There was no need to thank God for it. It was not a meal—it was a treat. He could taste that broth now and feel the rich liquor, made smooth by barley, soothing his tongue! . . . And sometimes they had little pic-nic suppers of butter and salt and potatoes! . . .

Oh, God, would they ever get out of this bloody boat! . . .

Suddenly the man by Robert's side whispered cunningly to him. Which would he prefer to do, starve or eat human flesh? "Starve," said Robert, recovering himself. But if some one were to die! . . . "Ah, quit!" Robert exclaimed impatiently and turned away. The murmurs against the old man died down. Murmuring of any sort required strength, and they had lost their strength. Better weather came, and the boat moved along at a faster rate, and this heartened them. A

finer spirit rose among them, although their provisions were now exhausted. They chewed bootlegs and anything else that was chewable to still their pangs, and because they were travelling a hundred miles a day, their faith in their deliverance survived, despite their hungry plight. There was a horrible interlude when madness took possession of some of them, and they plotted to kill the old man because, so they said, he had hidden piles of gold in the boat. They lay in their places and plotted to seize it, but their plottings were no more than the ravings of sick and feverish minds. They had had no food for five days, and very little water, and had reached that stage of starvation when hunger causes no pain whatever! . . . In a little while they would die, and some day their boat would be found drifting on the tide, with a crew of skeletons! Or perhaps, a great sea would come and sink them, and there would be nothing to show that they had suffered and endured! . . .

VI

Six weeks after they had drawn away from the burning *Firefly* they were rescued.

"An' it was the oul' man that saved us," said Robert, when he was well enough to say anything. "He took us over four thousand miles of waste water with ten days' provisions, an' brought every man Jack of us in the long-boat safely to land six weeks after we were burned out of our ship. He's a sailor, sir, a seafarin' man, an' I pray to God whatever seas I sail, here or hereafter, I'll have his sort for my captain!"

They were nearly wrecked as they came ashore on the island where they landed, but the pity of God was

extended to them and they were saved. They stayed on the island until they were nursed back to health, when they sailed to San Francisco where they separated and went their ways. There was no more desire for vengeance in Robert. He loitered in San Francisco for a while, earning what money he could, but he made no attempt to find Antonio or Matt or Joe. He was tired of the sea, tired of struggle, tired of his own desire! He decided to travel by land to New York, but took his time over the journey. He found himself one night in Cincinnati, wandering aimlessly through a street full of fine houses. He looked through the unshaded windows of a room in which a happy family were sitting at a meal—a father and a mother and three children—and suddenly, made homesick by that simple, affectionate life, he resolved to go home. His drifting days became offensive to him. For more than seven years he had knocked about the world, without a sign to his family that he was alive, and now, intensely, he longed for his kindred. A casual glance at those children eating their evening meal and entertaining a happy father and a happy mother with their talk and little jests had stirred up desires that he had imagined to be dead! . . .

He had scarcely any money, but he had not forgotten Lop Ear's lessons in freight-train travelling.

In New York, he would easily get a job in a ship for England.

VII

Six weeks later he landed in Belfast and made his way along the Sand Quay to Pottinger's Road. He stood for a while by the heaps of sand and recalled the

beginning of his adventures. It was just about here that the barge in which he had sailed up the Lagan lay. More than seven years ago that was. He had been a boy then, and now he was a man, with strange experiences behind him. There were changes in the city, little changes that he might not have noticed had he continued to live in it. He found himself regretting the changes. He had a queer wish that all should be exactly as it had been when he went away! . . . He turned away from the sand-heaps and continued on his way home. Crowds were crossing the bridge on their way to work in the ware-rooms and offices and shops in the centre of the city, and he scanned faces hoping to see one that he knew, but saw none. The breeze blowing off the river smelled fresh, and he sniffed it eagerly. Fear came to him as he did so. He had assumed that his mother would be alive, but supposing she were dead! . . . The fear almost paralysed him, and he clutched at the parapet of the bridge for support. She might have died of grieving for him. People would say he had killed her, and what answer could he make to them? Not once during his years of absence had he sent a word to her. Remorse filled him, and he remained standing by the parapet reluctant to go further lest his fear should prove to be true. He gazed down the river, and mechanically noted familiar sights; the Albert Memorial, the hump on the Cave Hill, the iron railway bridge across the Lagan! . . .

"Oh, God, what'll I do if she's dead?" he moaned.

He left the bridge and walked along the road to the shop. Nothing here was changed. There was Mr. Peden's shop seeming no different from what it was on the day Robert ran away. He stood at the corner of

Portugal Street for a few minutes and stared at the Salvation Army Barracks. No change there. Nothing altered. Across the street Mineely's shop still stood, and he felt that if he were to go and look at its windows he would see the same pile of red and white cokernut chips that had lain there when he was a boy, flattening his nose against the window until it was white.

"It makes you want to cry," he said to himself, "seein' everything the same!"

He walked up to the window of his mother's shop and stood in front of the window until he had raised enough courage to enter the door. It looked well stocked, as it always had. Anyhow, the shop was still prosperous! . . . He moved towards the door, his heart thumping wildly as he did so. Supposing! . . .

He hesitated for a second or two in the doorway and then boldly entered. His mother was standing behind the counter, and she peered at him as he came up to it!

"Yes!" she said. "Can I serve you with anything?"

He did not speak for a moment, and he saw her bending towards him. "Do you not know me, ma?" he said.

Her face changed instantly. "Is it you, Robert?" she murmured.

"Aye, ma!"

And then she did what he had never seen her do before, she cried without any effort to conceal her tears. She stretched her arms across the counter to him and drew his head into her arms and kissed him. "Oh, son, dear," she said, "you've come back to me at last!"

THE THIRD PART
OF
THE WAYWARD MAN

What sacred instinct did inspire
My soul in childhood with a hope so strong?
What secret force moved my desire
To expect my joys beyond the seas, so young?
Felicity I knew
Was out of view,
And being here alone,
I saw that happiness was gone
From me! For this
I thirsted absent bliss,
And thought that sure beyond the seas,
Or else in something near at hand—
I knew not yet—since naught did please,
I knew—my Bliss did stand.
But little did the infant dream
That all the treasures of the world were by:
And that himself was so the cream
And crown of all that round about did lie.
Yet, thus it was; the Gem,
The Diadem,
The ring enclosing all
That stood upon this earthly ball,
The Heavenly Eye
Much wider than the sky,
Wherein they all included were,
The glorious Soul, that was the King,
Made to possess them, did appear
A small and little thing.

THOMAS TRAHERNE.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

I

It seemed to Mrs. Dunwoody then that life had relented and was allowing her a full measure of happiness. All her children were with her or near at hand. Her business was very prosperous both in the Pottinger's Road shop and in the branch in Cromac Street. Alec was a good son to her and had no object in life, it seemed, but the welfare of the shops. Sometimes he would invite Brenda Cairnduff, who was a most refined and well-reared girl, to a soirée or a trip and would remark afterwards that she was a brave, nice sort of a young woman, but, though a neighbour or two had hinted that he was almost "going up the road" with her, he seemed to have no notion of her as a wife. His mind was set on the shops. Brenda was still too young for marriage. Mattie and her son lived in the shop, and Margaret, now married to Sam Peden who had succeeded his father in the ownership of the Terrace, almost lived in it, for a thin wall separated her from her mother, and a thump on it was quickly answered. Margaret's marriage had been a disappointment to her mother at first, for no children came,—"Och, time enough!" said Sam, when the matter was solemnly mentioned to him—but this disappointment had been removed. Margaret was the mother of one child, a girl, and, when Robert returned to his home, was carrying another child which was born, a boy, three months

later. Robert, his mother thought, was settling down. He seemed content to help her in the Pottinger's Road shop or, when there was need, cross the two bridges to Cromac Street and help Alec. Sometimes she would say to him, with a note of uncertainty in her voice, "You *are* settlin' down, Darkie, aren't you?" and he would reply, after a faint hesitation, "Yes, ma, I'm settlin' down!" And so he appeared to be, though now and then he polished the plate-glass window with greater vigour than was necessary. One morning early, while she was leaning against the front-room window, she saw him run into the middle of the road, and while he stood there, she heard the syren of a steamer sounding and saw the piece of chamois leather drop from his hand as he started forward! . . . She hurriedly threw up the window and called to him. He turned and looked at the shop and then, picking up the chamois leather from the roadway, went back to the window, waving his hand to her as he went.

II

Alec and he again shared the front attic as they had shared it before he ran away, but their talk with each other never became confidential. Alec went to bed to sleep, he said, and not to gabble. He had to be up early in the morning and work hard for his living, and he had no time for talk in bed. He had greeted Robert with sober affection on his return, but the affection did not grow. It seemed, instead, to diminish, though nothing that he did or said denoted any diminution in love for his brother.

"Alec is quiet!" his mother said. So did his friends.

He was not expected to be demonstrative. His quietness, indeed, was considered to be a merit in him. He could be depended upon. He was very faithful to his habits, and whatever there was of romance in his nature seemed to be eclipsed by the management of the branch shop. He dressed the window with as much delight as a girl feels when she dresses herself for her first ball. He hated rain because it dirtied his window. There was no need to persuade him to get up early and go to the shop; the difficulty was to persuade him to leave it in the evening. Saturday night was the happiest night of the week for him, because on that night the shop remained open until eleven o'clock. In slack hours of the day he would wander round the shop, patting the shelves almost with affection! . . . He came and went with singular regularity. Almost one could have told the time any day by his passing. At such a moment he would be precisely at so-and-so. There was a story told of him that once a woman, seeing him walk past her door, hurriedly put the kettle on the fire and exclaimed, "Lawney bless us, I'm late with the tay! There's Alec Dunwoody away by, an' me never got the kettle on!" She was certain that her clock was slow. "You may well be proud of your son, Mrs. Dunwoody!" people said to his mother, and she nodded her head, but turned to look at Robert. "I'm well and proud this day," she said, "to have my two sons by my side!"

If she could marry Robert to some sober-minded, quiet girl she would have no more fear about him. When he was married, he would lose his restless desires and would settle down. A wife and a child or two would tame him! . . . She turned the idea over in her

mind many times, letting her thoughts range among the girls she knew and scheming to provide a means of livelihood for Robert when she had found a suitable girl to marry him. She would bring Alec back to the Pottinger's Road shop and give the branch to Robert for a wedding-present. That was what she would do. Robert liked to be his own master, but Alec was content to serve under her. What a God's mercy it was that she could depend upon Alec to do her bidding and make no complaint. He had built up the business in Cromac Street and made it as profitable as hers, and she was well pleased with him. There was no need to say anything about her intention to any one yet awhile. She had first to find a girl and then to make Robert marry her. But she would do it. She *must* do it. He must not go away again! . . . That morning when she had seen him standing in the middle of the road, listening to the sound of the syren, had frightened her. There could come another moment when he would grow restless, and she might not be able to call him back. Before that moment came, she must somehow have him in chains! . . .

She was sitting at the window in the front room one Sunday afternoon when she saw Alec coming down the road from the church in the Short Strand where he taught a class in the Sunday School. Brenda Cairnduff, who had been away from home when Robert returned, was walking with him, and suddenly Mrs. Dunwoody thought to herself, "That girl'll do!" and called to Robert to come to her. He ran up the short flight of stairs from the kitchen and joined her at the window.

"Look at that girl with Alec!" she said, pointing to Brenda.

"Who is she?" he replied.

"Do you not know her?"

He looked more closely at her. "Is it Brenda Cairnduff?" he asked.

"It is. She's just come home from a visit. Her mother's makin' a gran' girl of her!"

Brenda's father had died during Robert's absence from home.

"Is Alec great on her?" said Robert.

The question startled and ruffled his mother. "Alec!" she said sharply. "Great on Brenda! What put that notion in your head? Alec's not the coortin' sort!"

"Well, he's lookin' at her as if he wouldn't mind goin' up the road with her a piece!"

"You don't know Alec," she replied. "He has no eyes or ears for anything but the shop. Do you like the look of her, son?"

He turned away indifferently. "Ah, she's right enough!" he said, seating himself at the table in the centre of the room, where the tea things were laid. They always took their tea in the front room on Sunday. "Will the tea be long?"

"No, not long! We'll have it when Alec comes in. What do you think of Brenda?"

"She's all right, I daresay! A bit severe-lookin', but she'll suit Alec! . . ."

"Never mind about Alec," his mother impatiently interrupted. "It's you I'm askin', not him! Do you like the look of her?"

"Och, it doesn't matter whether I do or not," he answered. "It's Alec'll be the judge of that."

"She doesn't concern Alec, and he doesn't concern her. They just walked home from the Sabbath School

together. That's all! There's nothin' atween them, nothin' at all!" She paused, and then added, a little slyly, "She was greatly set on you, Darkie, when you were a lump of a lad!"

"Was she?"

"Aye, but, of course, you were children then," she continued, altering her voice. "Run down to the door, will you, an' bid Alec bring her in to her tea."

He went down as she bade him, and found Alec and Brenda standing near the shop-door, talking. She broke off her conversation and came to Robert immediately she saw him. "Oh, Darkie, I'm glad you're back!" she said, holding out her hand to him.

"Thank you, Brenda," he replied.

"You're greatly changed!"

"And so are you! I hardly knew you. You're lookin' well on it, Brenda!"

"I'm feeling well, Darkie. How's your mother?"

"She's rightly. It was her sent me down to ask you to come in an' have your tea with us!"

Alec, who had joined them, flushed with pleasure when he heard this. "Do, Brenda!" he urged.

"It's queer and kind of Mrs. Dunwoody! . . ."

"Och, not at all! Come on in!"

She paused for a moment. "Alec," she said, "would you mind going and telling mamma I'm having my tea with you?"

"I will gladly," he replied.

"An' I'll go in with Darkie," she said.

"Right you are," Alec exclaimed, going off to her mother's house.

Robert held the door open for her as she entered.

"I'm really terribly glad to see you, Darkie!" she said, putting her hand on his arm.

"An' I'm glad to see you," he replied.

That was the first of her regular Sunday visits.

She came, very stiff and starched and shy, but very pretty, at five o'clock to tea. She had fine, fair hair, very tidily brushed, and she wore neat clothes that seemed to be as tidily brushed as her hair. Her buttoned boots, with patent leather toes, fitted her slim feet without a crease and shone sedately beneath her fawn-coloured costume, from which a neatly-trimmed white petticoat peeped. She wore pince-nez glasses which were then considered to be a sign of great gentility and to give a look of distinction to all who wore them. She was the neatest, tidiest woman Robert had ever seen, and he thought to himself that the hairs of her head were more likely to be numbered than those of any other person.

"Bandbox!" Margaret said of her a little scornfully, but her scorn might be attributed to jealousy, for Margaret was big with her baby and looked blowsy and ruffled.

But Brenda blushed prettily. Even Margaret acknowledged that her pink cheeks contrasted prettily with her fine, fair hair.

"I'm not denyin'," she said, "that Brenda has looks. I'm only sayin' she looks buttoned up!"

Mrs. Dunwoody made no comment on such remarks. She contented herself with seeing that Brenda sat between her and Robert at the tea-table, and urging him to replenish her plate when it was empty, for Brenda was too ladylike to help herself to food.

"Darkie, dear!" Mrs. Dunwoody would say, for she now always called him by the name that Brenda preferred, "pass the cookies to Brenda!" or "Look after Brenda, Darkie! I'm sure she'd like a piece of that apple tart!"

Suddenly Alec became aware of his mother's purpose. They were sitting in the front room, eating their tea, and he caught his mother's eye as she spoke of Brenda to Robert. He stared at her incredulously, and his pale, flabby face darkened, and his mild eyes grew angry. He was holding his cup to his lips, but he did not drink any of the tea in it, and his hand shook as he put the cup down in its saucer. He looked away from his mother, first at Brenda and then at Robert, and instantly sweat came on his brow. Margaret, unaware of the cause of his emotion, but seeing that something was wrong, put out her hand and touched him.

"What is it, Alec?" she said.

He shook her hand off his sleeve. "Nothin'," he answered and gulped down some tea. He did not join in the conversation that evening, but sat moodily listening to what the others said. Brenda always stayed until it was time to go to church, and went with them and sat in their pew. On this night, Alec, with a look of resolution on his face, prepared to walk by her side, but as they were leaving the shop, his mother called to him. "Give me your arm, Alec son," she said, adding to Robert, "You walk on ahead with Brenda, Darkie! I want to discuss a wee matter of business with Alec!"

III

It was Robert who discovered in Brenda's small,

round face, out of which slightly prominent blue eyes coldly peered, some resemblance to Queen Victoria.

"You're like the Queen, Brenda!" he said, and immediately the others, closely regarding her, agreed.

Her pretty blush showed that she was delighted with his discovery. She took an amazing amount of interest in the doings of the Royal Family, and would draw the discourse round to the last report of the Prince of Wales, who, she thought, was an unfortunate man to have so long-lived a mother. "Not but what the Queen's a good woman! I would be the last to wish her to come to any harm. All the same it's hard for a man of his age to be kept out of things the way he is. They say, of course, that the Queen would have abdicated long ago if he had led a better life! . . ."

She bored Mrs. Dunwoody and Margaret, neither of whom took much interest in royal persons, with her stories of them, but they listened to her with some pretence of attention. But if there were signs of lassitude in the rest of her listeners, there were no signs of it in Alec. To him, whatever she said was absorbingly interesting, and he would garner little items of royal information to add to her great store. He had lost some of his uneasiness about Brenda and Robert, for it was apparent that Robert was not so responsive to Brenda's charms as Mrs. Dunwoody wished him to be, and sometimes it was he who walked by her side as they went to church. One evening, when Brenda and Alec were walking in front of them, Mrs. Dunwoody abruptly said to Robert, "What do you think of her?"

"Who? Brenda? I never give her a thought," he replied.

"But what do you think of her?" she said anxiously. His tone disturbed her.

"She'd be all right if she could loosen herself. She's too tight an' tidy!"

Her glance shot up at him as he spoke.

"She'd make a good wife to a man," she insisted.

"I daresay," he answered, "Alec an' her! . . ."

"Och, quit about Alec! Alec's not the sort that needs a wife. He's a quiet, amenable man, an' well content as he is. She'd do rightly for a restless sort—make him more content. Have you no notion of her yourself, son?"

"Notion of *her!* . . ."

"Wheesht, son!" she said. "They'll hear you!"

Until that moment Robert had not thought of Brenda Cairnduff as a wife. She bored him with her silly stories about the Queen's family . . . and when people bored him he left them out of his thoughts. But now suddenly she came into his mind and insisted on her right to remain there, not as a chronicler of royal small talk, but as a woman.

"She'd never have the like of me," he said, just as they turned into the church.

"You've given her no encouragement to want you," Mrs. Dunwoody replied.

They walked down the long aisle from the front door of the church to the pew where Brenda and Alec were already sitting. He was leaning forward with his hands over his eyes, while she very neatly knelt on one of the bosses, but they could see through his divided fingers that his eyes were not on God's glory but on Brenda Cairnduff's.

That evening, Mrs. Dunwoody, when the service was

ended, suggested that Robert should take Brenda for a walk and bring her back in time for supper.

"You'd like a walk, Brenda, wouldn't you?" she said.

"Och, I don't know!" Brenda murmured.

"It'll do you good, dear!" Mrs. Dunwoody urged, using the word "dear" for the first time.

"Mebbe you're right," Brenda answered, "but I daresay Robert doesn't feel like a walk! . . ."

When she left the decision to him like that, he could do no other than say that a walk was what he desired more than anything else. He hesitated for a few seconds before he and Brenda left. "A walk would do us all good!" he said, and Alec, suddenly bold, said, "I was just goin' to make the same suggestion!" But Mrs. Dunwoody was tired.

"No, Alec!" she said, "I'm not feelin' up to one! An' Mattie's tired too!"

"No, I'm not! . . ." Mattie began, but her mother pressed hard on her arm and she said no more.

Brenda's face fell when Robert proposed that they should all go for a walk, but it brightened again when Mrs. Dunwoody arranged that only Robert and she should go. Her blue eyes searched his face from behind their barricades of glass, and she seemed to take possession of him as he fell into step by her side.

"We'll be back before long," she said almost gaily as they went off together.

"Mind you are!" Mrs. Dunwoody murmured.

IV

Alec turned on his mother the moment they were gone. "What are you tryin' to do?" he demanded.

"Tryin' to do?" she repeated.

"Aye, with them two—with Bob an' Brenda?"

She looked at him in astonishment. "You're forgettin' yourself, Alec!" she said. "It's your mother you're speakin' to in that voice—not a wee paper boy!"

"I know rightly who I'm talkin' to, an' I want to know what this is all about. I've a right to know!"

This was an Alec she had never seen or heard before.

"Right! Right! What right?"

"Don't try to put me off, mother. I've watched you this while back, an' I've seen your manœuvrin's to get Brenda an' Bob together. I'm not the soft fool you think I am! . . ."

"I forbid you to speak to me like that. Here, Mattie, here's the key. Run on ahead, will you, an' open the door!"

"Och, ma! . . ."

"Do as you're bid, girl," she said, though Mattie was a widow and a mother. "Am I to be checked by the whole pack of you?"

Mattie reluctantly went to do what she was told, but she did not miss much, for Alec and his mother barely spoke to each other as they approached the shop-door. Mrs. Dunwoody went straight to her room, where she took off her bonnet and mantle, while Alec sat heavily down by the table where Mattie was laying the supper.

"Are you sick or what, Alec?" she asked.

"Aye," he said, "I'm damned sick . . . sick of the whole lot of you!"

"Alec!"

"Quit Alecking!" he shouted. "For God Almighty's sake, quit Alecking! Am I the only one in the house that's never to be considered or thought of?"

Mattie was utterly bewildered. "What in the earthly world's wrong?" she exclaimed.

"I've worked, haven't I, worked myself sick an' sore an' tired, an' never let a murmur out of me! An' this is all the thanks I get for it! . . ."

"What is? Who's been sayin' anythin'? . . ."

Mrs. Dunwoody descended from her room. "What's the matter?" she demanded.

"Alec's put on about somethin'," Mattie said.

"Oh! What's put you out, Alec?"

He jumped to his feet. "You know well enough, mother! . . ."

"I know nothin', son. You've told me nothin'!"

He sat down again, and buried his head in his hands. Suddenly, to Mattie's horror and distress, he was crying.

"You never mind me," he cried. "It's all him, him, *him!*"

"Who?"

"Don't let on, mother! You know well enough. Robert! Everything in the house is Robert, Robert, *Robert!* . . ."

"I don't understand you!"

"You understand me well enough. I've been a good son to you!"

"No one'll deny that in my presence," she replied.

"An' he's been a bad one!"

She was indignant at once. "That's not true!" she said.

"It is true, though you won't admit it. But, after all that, you love him better nor you love me!"

She denied that she had favourites.

"Then what are you eggin' him on to marry Brenda for?"

"Why shouldn't I marry him to her?" she asked.

Again he jumped up, and his eyes were wet and distended. "Why?" he shouted. "Why? Because I want her! . . ."

"*You* want her!"

He did not immediately reply. His outburst must have astonished him, and now, perhaps, he was dismayed by it.

"You were saying somethin' about favourites?" Mrs. Dunwoody said.

"Aye, ma!" he said. He had ceased to use the more formal word "mother" and was back again to the obedience and affection in which one used the word "ma."

"You know rightly," she insisted, "that I have no favourites. As well as you're livin' you know that! I love all of you the same! . . ."

"No, ma!" he feebly began.

"Yes, son, all of you the same. If there's any idea in your head that I prefer Robert to you, get rid of it. I don't. But he gives me more trouble to keep by me than you do, an' I have to strive harder with him. That's all! I think an' think in the night how will I keep him contented here like you, an' time an' again I tell myself, there's only one way to do it—get him married to some quiet, amenable woman that'll make a home for him where he can be the master. He'll never stay contented in this house because I'm the master here, an' I can't give up bein' the master for him or no one. That's why I'm throwin' him an' Brenda together. She'll tame him! . . ."

"But, ma, *I* want her! . . ."

"Want, want, *want!* Why do you want *her* more

nor another? Isn't it all one to you who you marry, so long as the woman is quiet an' amenable an' can make a good home for you where you'll be willin' to stay contented?"

"No, ma, it isn't. I want her, an' not just anybody!"

She paused for a moment as if she were examining this statement.

"What's there about her to make you want her so much? She seems to me an ordinary quiet sort of a woman, a bit finicky perhaps, an' God knows I'm sick, sore an' tired of hearin' her talk about the Queen's children. But there's nothin' notable about her, to make you want her desperate bad, an' start cryin' your eyes out because your brother's gettin' her!"

"I'm not able to tell you what it is. I don't know. But I feel it here, tuggin' at my heart 'til I can hardly bear it. Forby, ma, Bob! . . ."

"Quit callin' him Bob. You're the only one that does it!" she interrupted.

"He doesn't want her. She's not his sort of woman at all. He makes fun of her to me in the attic. I can't thole it sometimes! . . ."

"Many's a man makes fun of the woman he marries before he marries her. There's nothin' in that!"

"All the same, ma, I want her, an I'll have her. Bob doesn't want her, and it's no good you tryin' to make him."

"We'll see, son. There's a third person in this matter you've not mentioned—Brenda herself. *You* want her, you say, an' Robert *doesn't* want her, but it never enters your head to wonder what she wants. I tell you, man, I have eyes in my head, an' that woman doesn't want you. It's Robert she's after! . . ."

"No, no, no. You're makin' that up!"

She lashed him with her tongue. "You know rightly it's Robert she wants. Haven't you see her hungry look at him? She's never looked at you, that sly, ravenous way she looks at him, has she? Has she, Alec? Answer me, son!"

"I've paid no heed to the way she looks at me! . . ."

"Oh, Alec! Isn't it your fear she's after him that makes you so frightened? Would you be burstin' out on me like this if you were sure of her? No, son, you know as well as I do that that girl's heart-scalded for him. Do you think I don't understand her sort—so quiet an' well-behaved an' nice an' genteel an' never doin' anything to make themselves noticeable!" She gave a queer, bitter laugh at that. "An' underneath her quietness an' her neatness she's on fire. I tell you, that woman's hungry and thirsty for a man like Robert, an' she'll never look sideways at you while he's about!" Her voice changed its note as her mind changed its thought. "It's a quare thing," she said, "me to have two daughters married and mothers, an' my two sons not to be married at all. The name of the Dunwoodys will die out, because my sons won't content themselves an' marry an' have childher! . . ."

"You stopped me from marryin' Jenny Conn," Alec interrupted, recalling a love affair of his youth.

"That flyaway thing! God forbid that that woman should be the mother of any gran'child of mine! Listen here, son! I'm older an' wiser nor you. I have more knowledge in my wee finger than all of you have in your whole bodies. I know when I'm wrong, an' I know when I'm beat. If I'm wrong about this, if Robert beats me, then I'll give in, an' you can have her.

But as sure as God's above me, I believe she wants him an' doesn't want you. You wouldn't have the girl marry you against her will, would you?"

"No, ma! . . ."

"Well, then! You see, don't you, that if she wants him, I can't do nothin' but help her to get him, because I'm feared to death he'll start roamin' again if I don't anchor him down somehow!"

"Well, what does that matter?" Alec demanded.

"What does what matter?"

"Why, whether he stays or goes. If he wants to ramble round the world, why should you try to stop him?"

"Because I want all of you here about me. That's why! Aren't you demented to be askin' that kind of a question! What's wrong with you all, to be trampin' off from your own place? Here's your home, isn't it, an' here's the country you were born in. Well, stay in it! If God meant you to be a foreigner, wouldn't He have made you one? Are you puttin' yourself up against God? . . ."

She beat him down, perhaps, because in his heart he knew that what she said was true, that Brenda wanted Robert and did not want him. He rose from his chair. "Well, have it your own way!" he said. "God knows I want little, an' that little's always denied me. I'll go to my bed now. I couldn't bear to be here when they come back."

"You'll see that I'm in the right," she replied.

She went up to him and put her arms about him and kissed him, and said, partly in appeal and partly in benediction, "God bless you, son, it'll be all right yet!" Then he went stumbling up the stairs, and sat down on

a chair and fumbled in the dark with his boots. When he was undressed, he threw himself into the big bed which he shared with Robert and for a little while tossed and tumbled from side to side. He was still awake when Robert came to bed.

"Are you asleep, Alec?" Robert said, as he came in.

"No, Bob!" was the reply.

"What made you go off an' leave me to cope with that woman by myself?"

"What woman?"

"Brenda! God only knows what He was up to when He made her! The niceness of her! An' the neatness! An' the little lady she is! My God, I never want to hear mention of the Royal Family from this time forward! When she wasn't tellin' me how lamentable it was for the fellas to be lyin' side by side on the grass with the girls, she was tellin' me what the Prince of Wales said to Lord Londonderry last Tuesday fortnight! She's all for havin' the peelers to patrol the dark lanes an' keep the fellas an' girls walkin'! . . . I was near in the mind to ask her to lie down on the grass herself for a while only I hadn't the nerve!"

Alec sat up in bed. "Do you not like her at all?" he said.

"Och, I don't bother my head about her," Robert replied.

But Alec was insistent. "Would you marry her if she was willin'?" he demanded.

"I tell you I never give her a thought. She's all right, in her way, an' she's nice-lookin' enough. I don't say she's not attractive, for she is. But she'd drive a man distracted mad with her finicky ways!"

"Finicky ways don't last for ever. They're only

young girl's tricks! She'd mebbe be all right for you after you were married!"

Robert dropped his boot heavily on the floor.

"Here," he said, "what are you all hintin' at? My ma's been at me, very mysterious, an' now you're at it, too! Are you all workin' to marry me to her?"

"You must do what you think best for yourself!"

"By God, if I thought that! . . ."

"Thought what?"

"Och, I don't know!"

He undressed and got into bed, and for a while neither of them spoke. Then Robert suddenly began to laugh.

"What ails you?" said Alec.

"I believe," Robert replied, "she has a notion of me. I declare to my God, I believe that girl's marked me down!"

"Why? What makes you think that?"

"Hints. I can't rightly tell you, but now I understand more nor I did. Hints!"

"Well, if you think she wants you, what are you goin' to do about it? Are you goin' to have her?"

"That's a question that wants answerin'. Good-night to you, Alec!"

He rolled over on his side and in a few moments he was fast asleep, but Alec continued to sigh heavily in the dark almost until the dawn.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

I

It was not until Robert had been at home for nearly a year that he resolved to go away again. The signs of unrest in him had grown plainer. He would rise suddenly from his seat and go to the window and look down on the narrow yard, and when he turned away again his eyes would be full of impatience and disquiet. Or he would go to the shop-door and listen for the syrens of the ships. His favourite walk was along the docks on the North Side of the Lagan, or to the shipyards on the South. Sometimes he took long walks into the hills that nearly encircled the city, and at no time did he disguise his hatred of shopkeeping. He talked more frequently of the places he had seen, and very rarely did he mention the miseries he had endured. Romance illuminated his seven years of wandering, and when he talked of the *Firefly* he did so almost as if the six weeks in the long-boat had been six weeks of delight.

"I wonder where the oul' fella is now," he would suddenly remark in the middle of a conversation.

"Oul' fella?" his mother would repeat. "What oul' fella?"

And then she would remember the captain of the *Firefly,* and would become silent.

Her plan to marry him to Brenda Cairnduff seemed

in danger of miscarriage, and she could not yet see any means of saving it. Alec, convinced perhaps that Brenda's mind was set on Robert, allowed himself to become entirely absorbed in the branch shop. It had been his pleasure before, but now it was his passion. He came and went about his business, dutiful and devoted, but kept his thoughts, whatever they were, to himself. He accepted his defeat and withdrew from the struggle. He grew a little dingier. His hair became thinner and grayer. The flabbiness of his features increased, and his dribbling moustache seemed almost to dribble away. Hardly any of them noticed Alec.

Brenda's visits increased. She came every Sunday to tea, and stayed to supper, and sometimes on week nights when trade was slack she would come into the shop and sit behind the counter with Mrs. Dunwoody, talking very vivaciously to her, though her eyes eagerly watched for the entrance of Robert.

There was now "talk" about them, and people would inquire whether Robert was "going" with her, to which Mattie, when she was asked, replied, "How do I know?" and was told that she knew well enough. "If he has any notion of her at all," she was assured, "he ought to get married to her, and not keep her hingin' around. Everybody's remarkin' about it."

Brenda contrived always to sit beside him. There was no need for Mrs. Dunwoody to manœuvre to get them together. Brenda conducted her own manœuvres. Her clothes seemed to become neater and more tidy as her determination to marry Robert grew, and with this increase of trimness she seemed to become more attractive. There were times when she fascinated Robert, when her neat, tidy ways filled him with admira-

tion, and she was quick to learn how to stimulate his affection for her. Her interest in Royalties remained, but was less frequently mentioned. Mrs. Dunwoody had hinted to her that she bored them, and especially Robert, by her interminable accounts of Royal activities. Now, when she spoke of them at all, she took care to do so when he was not present. And she developed an interest in the business which delighted and astonished Mrs. Dunwoody who had not expected to find such an interest in her. "You'll do well in a shop of your own, Brenda," she said to her. "I think I would," Brenda replied. She had a fondness for fawn-coloured clothes which admirably suited her, and she managed to insinuate an intriguing whiteness into the edges of them. Little lawn stock collars edged the high neck of her frock, and her wrists were encircled by soft narrow linen cuffs. She seldom moved without kicking her skirt so that there was a momentary white gleam! . . .

Her hands were well shaped and had a healthy tan on them, and she was scrupulous about her nails. Mrs. Dunwoody often remarked on Brenda's hands. It was, indeed, by their hands that Mrs. Dunwoody judged people. "She has nice nails," was her highest praise. As Brenda came up the stairs on Sunday evening from the darkened shop into the kitchen, lit by oil lamps, she seemed very pretty in her tidy way, especially if her cheeks were warmly glowing as they often were, and sometimes Robert, sitting by the fire and seeing her standing at the top of the stairs, would look at her with a queer bewildered longing. He would imagine himself in love with her, only to discover on the following day that his desire had faded. Then he would make fun of her to his mother and Mattie, deriding her for

her primness and her pretence. Once he mocked her to her face.

"Listen, Brenda," he said, "I heard a great yarn about the Prince of Wales this mornin'!"

"Oh! What?" she answered innocently.

"He eats food just like a human bein'!" he replied. "Many's a time he's been known to take a drink of water. He wears clothes! . . ."

"You're makin' fun of me!" she pouted.

"No, I'm not. I tell you he goes to sleep every night an' wakes up in the mornin'! . . ."

"Now, I know you're makin' fun of me!" she said, rising in a huff.

"Sit down," he said, and immediately she did so.

He knew that she loved him, and he used his knowledge unfairly. He would say things to her, taunting things, that he would not have said to any other woman, knowing that even if he wounded her feelings she would rather that he taunted her, than remained indifferent to her. There were times when he seemed to loathe her—that any affection he had for her was merely the yellow foam on great, green waves of hate. Her sense of possession made her say to him, when they came out of church, "Will you take me a walk, Darkie?" When he answered, as on rare nights he did, "No, I don't want a walk!" she contentedly replied, "Very well—just as you please!" and then, full of remorse, he would say, but still ungraciously, "Well, come on then!"

II

It was after such a night that Robert, during supper, suddenly said, "Ma, I've made up my mind to go to

America!" There was an instant silence in the kitchen. Brenda bent her head over her plate, and Alec put down his knife and fork, and stared at his brother. Mrs. Dunwoody turned slightly in her chair. "What, son?" she said.

"I'm goin' to America. I'm tired of this place. I want to be movin' again!"

"Oh!"

Her short replies unnerved him, and he began to talk rapidly and at length. "I can't settle here. I can't settle anywhere. I'm beginnin' to feel stifled. I want somethin' different. I'm the sort that has to go trampin' about, seein' places an' people. Here you are, all of you, content to go on from day's end to day's end, doin' the same things an' never wantin' to do any different! . . . I'm not like that. I like to be shiftin' about, doin' things just when the mood's on me! . . ."

"You had seven years of that life, Robert, but you were glad to quit it an' come home again to a dacent, orderly life. How do you know you'll like it any better nor you did?"

"I don't know! But I've made up my mind, all the same. I'll go down the Harbour the morra mornin' an' find out about boats!"

Brenda did not move. Her eyes still stared steadily at her plate. Mrs. Dunwoody got up from her chair.

"You must do what you think best, son!" she said, but there was no resignation in her voice. That tone did not denote defeat. The fight was not ended; it had barely begun. "We'll go into the drawin'-room," she continued. "Is the lamp lit, Mattie?"

"An' the fire, too!" Mattie answered.

They had risen from the table, all except Brenda—

and they waited for her to rise, too. But Mrs. Dunwoody said, "Go on in front, all of you! I want to say somethin' to Brenda!"

"I was goin' to clear away the things," said Mattie.

"Leave them a while. Brenda an me'll attend to them!"

Robert and Alec had both gone to the front room, and Mattie made remarks about this and about that, but neither of her brothers answered nor did she seem to expect them to answer. When Brenda and Mrs. Dunwoody came into the front room, Brenda's eyes were red, but Mrs. Dunwoody's were unusually bright.

"You're all lookin' very solemn on it," she said.

Their looks did not become less solemn through that remark, and they sat in a silence, broken now and then by constrained talk which died from sheer inability to keep itself going. Then Brenda got up from her seat and said, "I think I'll be going now, Mrs. Dunwoody!" and Mrs. Dunwoody replied, "Very well, Brenda!" and turned to Robert. "Robert'll leave you to your door," she added. He looked up resentfully, and had it on the tip of his tongue to say that he would not take her home. His mother must have known this, too, for she said again, and very firmly, "Robert'll see you home!" He rose without speaking, and left the room, and Brenda when she had said "Good-night!" to the others, followed him, leaving them sitting in silence in front of the fire, as if they were waiting for some one. Even Alec, who would normally have been in bed by this time, sat on, waiting. The distance from the shop-door to Brenda's was not great, but it was a long while before Robert returned. They heard his footsteps in the street, and then the noise of the front door being

unlocked. He seemed to stumble up the stairs! . . . And then, bewildered, Mattie sat upright in her seat and listened.

"There's somebody with him," she said, and ran to open the drawing-room door. Brenda was standing there, and her eyes were glowing. She bent down and kissed Mattie and hugged her. Behind her, gloomy and fierce in the dusk, was Robert.

"I'm going to be your sister," she whispered.

The others had risen at her entrance, and were waiting for her to speak. Alec's face flushed, but they were too dazzled by Brenda's news to pay much heed to him. Mrs. Dunwoody came forward, and Brenda almost ran into her arms.

"Darkie wants to marry me," she said, and suddenly she was crying.

"Where is he?" his mother asked, comforting her.

Mattie threw the door wide open. "Here he is," she said, and took him by the hand and drew him into the room. "You'll not leave us now, Robert, will you?" she added. He looked at her for a moment or two and then glanced around the room until he saw his mother and Brenda. "No," he said, smiling, but his smile was not that of a contented man.

"He'll never go away again," said Mrs. Dunwoody, with exultation in her voice. "Brenda'll take care of that, won't you, Brenda?"

Brenda looked up at her. She did not speak. She smiled.

III

There was a clatter of conversation. Mrs. Dunwoody kissed Brenda and Robert, and then, for no reason at

all, kissed Alec and Mattie. She loosened her tongue, and soon had Brenda's loosened, too. But neither Alec nor Robert said anything. They sat in the shadows and waited until the women had done. Robert looked once at Alec, and his lips moved as if he were about to speak. But he did not speak, nor did Alec then or ever after wish him well in his marriage. It was late when Brenda rose to go. She glanced at Robert with a look of possession. He was hers. No need now to say, "Will you see me home, Darkie?" She had but to rise and immediately he would rise, too, interrupt his talk, however interesting it might be, and prepare to go with her. He belonged to her.

"Are you ready?" she said in a tone of assurance.

He nodded his head.

When they had gone, Mrs. Dunwoody sat down before the fire and folded her hands in her lap and sighed with contentment. Mattie, at her side, remarked on the suddenness with which the engagement had come about. "What did you say to her, ma?" she asked.

"When?"

"After we had our supper—when you an' her were by your lone!"

"Me!" said Mrs. Dunwoody. "I didn't say anything!"

That was the first—perhaps the only—time that Mattie did not believe what her mother had said.

She glanced at Alec. "Isn't it time you were away to your bed?" she said. "You've got to get up in the mornin'!"

He got up without answering, and went across the room to the door, without speaking to any of them.

"Good-night, son!" said his mother.

He went out, shutting the door behind him, and Mattie, suddenly aware of him, rose to follow. Her mother caught hold of her arm. "Let him be," she said.

Mattie sat down again, and presently Robert returned.

"Where's Alec?" he asked.

"Away to bed," his mother replied.

He hesitated for a moment, before he went to her.

"You've had your way," he said accusingly.

"I hope it's your way, too!" she answered.

Then he broke out angrily. "You know damned well it's not!" he said.

Mattie became indignant. "Robert!" she rebuked, "what way's that to talk!"

But Mrs. Dunwoody restrained her. "Quiet, daughter!" she said, and then turned to Robert. "It'll be your way before long, son. I'm old an' worn an' wise. I know what's best to be done. She'll be a good wife to you, an' I pray to God she'll have fine, healthy children that'll be a comfort to her an' to you an' to me. What kind of a life is it at all you're after, with your trampin' round the world where you have no contentment an' no home? Doesn't every man want a place where he can be settled an' rear up a family?"

"I'm not the settled sort," he retorted. "I tell you, ma, I'm a misfit! . . ."

"A what, son?"

"A misfit. There's no place here for me or anywhere. I have to tramp the world! . . ."

"Quit, son," she said, "quit! That's quare talk. I don't like to hear quare talk! No man's a misfit, as

you call it. If you can't find a place, you can make one, and where else can you make one better nor you can in your own country where God put you. Come here, son!"

He went and stood beside her chair.

"I'm a proud an' happy woman this night," she said. "I have my sons settled about me, an' my daughters, too, and I feel as if my family was buildin' itself up to be a credit to me an' to all my generations before me. I come from a fine family, an' I shall leave a fine family behind me. Come here, son, an' don't talk that way any more. Sit down an' content yourself!"

"But how am I to keep her?"

"Leave that to me, son!"

IV

Alec was not asleep when Robert went to bed, but he made no sign to show that he was awake. Robert stood in the middle of the room, as if he were thinking what he should do, and then went to the bed and leant over his brother. "Alec!" he said, but there was no reply.

"Alec!" he said again, and again there was no reply.

"Do you hear me, Alec?" he said.

Then Alec sat up in bed and glared at him with maddened eyes. "Hell roast you!" he said. "Can't you lave me alone!"

Robert started back. Then he turned away from his brother. "If that's the way you feel about it!" he said, and began to undress.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

I

In the middle of the next morning, Mrs. Dunwoody descended from her room to the shop, dressed for the street. Her appearance surprised Mattie, for she had not said that she was going out. "Where are you goin', ma?" Mattie inquired.

"To town," she replied. "I've a few things to do, an' mebbe I'll drop in at Alec's shop on the way back!"

That casual reference to Alec deceived Mattie. It was true that Mrs. Dunwoody had to call at several wholesale shops on business, but her visit to Alec was her principal occupation that morning. They soon discovered what it was. At dinner time, when they were waiting for her to return, Alec waiked into the shop, white with fury. Mattie seeing him so pale, and realising that her mother was not with him, immediately concluded that she was dead.

"What's happened her?" she said, clutching her face with her hands.

"Nothin'!" he replied. Then he turned on Robert. "You'd better go an' look after your shop!" he said.

"Look after my what?"

"Your shop! The shop I made for you an' . . . Brenda! It's yours now!"

"I don't understand you, Alec! . . ."

"You'll understand me rightly when you get there.

I've done with it anyway. I left her in charge 'til you go over an' take possession of it!"

He moved towards the stairs as if he were about to leave them, but Robert shouted after him. "Wait a bit, Alec. I haven't got the hing of this yet. Where's my ma?"

Alec turned back. "Didn't you know then? . . ."

"Know what? You're talkin' conundrums to me. What's up?"

"She came over a while ago to have a talk with me! . . ."

"She said she might drop in on you," said Mattie.

"Drop in on me! . . . Aye, she dropped in on me all right! Well, the long an' the short of it is she wants me to give up the branch so that Bob an' Brenda can have it when they're married! I'm to come back here, but I'll see the whole pack of you dead and damned before I come back. I've give up everything 'til now, but I'm done with givin' up. I'll give up no more. If she takes the shop from me, I'll never do another hand's turn for her, never in this world! . . ."

"But what on earth is she doin' there by herself?" Mattie demanded.

"I left her standin' there. All right, I said to her, if you want the shop for him, you can have it. An' I put on my cap an' coat, an' I come away! . . ."

"You left her there . . . by herself?"

"Aye. Haven't you all left me by myself all my life? Well, I'm done with it. Mebbe if I follow Bob's example an' make myself an anxiety all my days, I'll be a bit more thought of."

Robert did not speak, but stood staring strangely at Alec.

"What are you goin' to do?" Mattie demanded.

"I don't know. Clear out! Somethin' or other. I daresay somebody'll give me a job!"

Then Robert spoke. "Listen, Alec," he said, "whether you believe me or not, I knew no more of this than the dead! . . ."

"I believe you, Bob!"

"An' I'll not agree to take the shop from you. If Brenda an' me gets married! . . ."

"If! What are you if-in' about?" said Mattie. "Isn't it all arranged an' settled?"

"I'm talkin' to Alec, Mattie, not to you." He turned to Alec. "If her an' me gets married, we'll find some other way of earnin' a livin' than takin' yours from you."

Alec sat down miserably on a high stool at the counter. "It isn't the livin'," he said. "That's all right! But it's the shop! . . ."

"Well, make your mind easy on that. Go back now an' tell her what I said. I'm not goin' to be tied hand an' foot. Tell her that!"

And after some further argument and persuasion, Alec went back to his shop, and an hour later Mrs. Dunwoody returned.

"Ma!" Robert began when she entered.

But she put up her hand to silence him. "Wait!" she said. "I'm near famished. I've had nothin' to eat since this mornin'. Mattie, wet a cup of tea for me, dear!"

"I won't take the shop, ma!" Robert insisted.

"Well, well!" she answered wearily. "You're all so headstrong—even Alec that was always amenable!

Give me your shoulder, son, til I get up the stairs. I'm tired!"

II

But in the end, Alec was persuadea out of his shop, and Robert was persuaded into it. When she had drunk her tea, she went to bed to lie down and rest for an hour. When the hour was up, she was still lying down, and in the morning she complained that she was ill.

"Will I send for Dr. Gibson?" Mattie, full of anxiety, asked.

Mrs. Dunwoody nodded her head, and the fact that she gave permission to send for the doctor convinced them that she was seriously ill. "I'm just tired . . . tired!" she said.

Dr. Gibson came.

"Your mother's in need of a long rest," he said, when he came out of her room. "She's worn out—completely done up! You know she's an old woman! You mustn't think because she's so active and hardy that she's as young as you are. She's not. She's old!"

"Yes, doctor!"

"She's an old woman! Get that idea into your head, all of you! Something's been worrying her! Well, you mustn't let it worry her. She's old! Now, what about a stay at the shore? The coast'll do her a world of good! . . ."

And so the matter was settled. Mattie and Margaret, called to consultation, and Alec and Robert, now thoroughly frightened, decided that they would send her to Donaghreagh for a month, and when they went

to her to tell her of their decision, she did not, as they expected, dissent from it. She sent Robert and Brenda to Donaghreagh to take a room for her in the cottage where she and Robert had stayed when he was a boy.

"An' you'll come down an' see me, the pair of you, every Sunday," she made them promise. Brenda and she seemed to have much to say to each other that no one else was allowed to hear, and Mattie and Margaret began to be jealous. Margaret, now busy with her new child, had less time in which to resent her mother's intimacy with Brenda, but Mattie, living in the same house with her and more easily wounded, spoke her mind with some acerbity.

"Are you lettin' a stranger take the place of your own daughter?" she demanded in a bitter voice.

"What ails you?" her mother replied.

"Ails me? It's well you may ask, an' me put in the background by Brenda. You were always one for favourin' Darkie, an' now you're favourin' his wife."

Mrs. Dunwoody looked up at her angry daughter with a wry smile. "She isn't his wife yet, dear," she said. "Wait 'til she is."

It was while Mrs. Dunwoody stayed at Donaghreagh that Robert and Brenda were married. "You see, son," she said, "it'll be quieter for you to be married here nor it will be in Belfast, an' vou don't want a showy wedding."

That was her cunning. A showy wedding would have given her great pleasure, but she knew that Robert would respond to her plea for quietness.

"An' it isn't only that," she continued, "I'd like well to think of you marryin' here where I was married, an' in the place where your people belong."

She was torn between a desire to see Robert and Brenda married in the Episcopal church where she and her husband had been married, although they were Presbyterians, and a desire that they should be married by a Presbyterian minister. When she was a girl, people were not considered to be properly married unless a minister of the Church of Ireland said prayers over them, but now it was common for Presbyterians to be married by Presbyterian ministers. Mrs. Cairnduff, remembering that she was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, was anxious too that the marriage should be in a Presbyterian church, and it occurred to Mrs. Dunwoody that it would be a good thing if Mrs. Cairnduff came down to Donaghreagh and spent a week or two in the cottage with her, "for," she said, "the woman doesn't look near herself." Mrs. Cairnduff had not felt any loss of health, and was inclined to resent the way in which her daughter was being married with scarcely a will-you or won't-you from her; but she was glad to spend a fortnight by the sea, and while she was there, it was settled that Robert and Brenda should be married in the Presbyterian church on the Killisland Road. Mrs. Dunwoody went to the minister herself and made the arrangements, and on a Monday morning she and Robert and Brenda, and Mrs. Cairnduff and Margaret and Mattie and her son walked into the church for the wedding. The shop in Cromac Street was shut, for Monday was a slack day, but Alec was not able to come to the wedding, for it seemed to Mrs. Dunwoody, and he was willing to agree with her, that while the shop in Cromac Street could be closed, the shop in Pottinger's Road could not. They sat very still in their pews while the minister conducted the serv-

ice. Mrs. Cairnduff wept silently through it, but Mrs. Dunwoody neither wept nor smiled. She sat back in the seat with her eyes closed and her hands shut, nor did she open them until she heard the noise of movement and knew that the marriage was over. Brenda and Robert came first to her, and Brenda with a little gust of love, ran into her arms. "I'll be a good wife to him," she said, "I will indeed!"

Mrs. Dunwoody turned to her son. "Well, Robert!" she said.

"Well, ma!" he replied.

"You've got a wife," she continued.

"I've got a mother!" was his answer.

It was Brenda who insisted on a proper honeymoon. In Mrs. Dunwoody's day, a girl got married in the morning and went to the shore in the afternoon, and returned to her home at night. That was all the honeymoon she had. Brenda had notions far beyond Mrs. Dunwoody's, and she insisted that Robert and she should travel through the Glens of Antrim to Portrush and stay there for ten days.

"I'm not going to be married like a servant-girl," she said. "You're always talking about the quality you come from, and I'll marry like quality." Mrs. Dunwoody could find no answer to that.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

I

WHEN he put the question to himself, "Do you love Brenda?" Robert confessed that he did not, but the confession did not completely describe his feeling for her. The passion of love had not yet touched him. He had a fierce affection for his mother, which, however, had not prevented him from running away from her and absenting himself from her house for more than seven years without once informing her that he was still alive. He had not read very deeply in the literature of love or, indeed, in any literature, but what reading he had done, had left him with an impression that the passion of a lover for a woman was utterly different from the affection he had for his mother, however deep and strong that affection might be. It had left him, too, with an impression that the feeling he had for Brenda was almost equally remote from the passion of love. How odd a thing it was, he reflected, that in his search for romantic adventures he had found so little affection. He had not found any love among women. He had been too young at first for more than loutish flippancies with girls. A crudely-snatched kiss from an artless girl was amusing enough for the moment it was remembered, but it was no more than that; and the kisses he had snatched from casually-encountered girls left him untempted to snatch some more. No, that was not

the love that was written about, nor was his affair with the girl in the 'Frisco brothel—what was her name now? Funny, he couldn't remember her name! Mary or something! No, not Mary! . . . Clara, that was it! Clara? A fair-haired, plump little piece! . . . Well, that was not love. Passion all right, but not the passion of love. Or was it? *Was* that love, the thing that people wrote about. While he was in the bed with her, he wanted her terribly, undeniably, but now—well, look, he could scarcely remember her name and he did not suppose he would ever see her again nor did he care whether he did or not. His feeling for Brenda had no resemblance to any of these affections or passions. It was extraordinarily mixed. He liked her and disliked her. Her tidiness fascinated and repelled him. When he saw her, cool and dainty and unruffled, he felt a curious longing to fold her in his arms and take care of her, mingled with a wicked desire to crumple her hair and disorder all that trim and tidy appearance. Her laugh was pretty, but he quickly tired of her talk. Once or twice during their honeymoon, he had felt himself overpowered by passion for her and suddenly he had seized her in his arms with a violence that had frightened her! . . . He could see that she was afraid of that sort of love, yet she was strangely inquisitive about it. She probed into his past. She was sure that he must have seen a lot of the world and have undergone many queer experiences! . . . Oh, yes, he had. Did he ever tell her about the time Charlie and he were jailed in America? Oh, yes, she would laugh nervously, but she was not thinking of just that sort of experience. Other kinds of experience . . . well, he knew what people said about sailors; a wife in every port! . . .

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her about Clara. But he did not tell her. Not likely. Have her casting it up to him for the rest of his life! So he said nothing of it, but told her about storms in the Pacific and the rough times he had experienced while rounding the Horn. "But wasn't there ever anybody? . . ."

"No, there wasn't," he said, and although he had bedded with Clara, the statement was true.

II

He recalled his honeymoon from time to time. A queer business. One married a girl and then took her for a trip to some place, and at night, awkward, embarrassed, self-conscious, went to bed with her. Until the moment when pretence was no longer possible, pretence was maintained. There was the common pretence that the couple were not newly-married, but well-seasoned. There was the pretence that neither of them was anxious or perturbed about the thought that presently one of them would have to say, "Well, I suppose it's time for bed!" He had watched the hands of the clock in the hotel sitting-room creeping round its face and had felt a queer disrelish for the whole business of marriage. Here he was sitting in this room talking to a young woman with whom he would presently become terribly intimate and, damn it, he did not know the girl nor much care about her! . . . Outside, the sea was tumbling over rocks and sand, and somewhere in the haze a ship or two went sailing home. The thought of ships had made him rise and go towards the door, but Brenda had stopped him with, "Where are you going, Darkie?" Until then it had not occurred

to him that he would have to explain his movements to another person for the rest of his life. Hitherto, when he had wanted to do anything, he did it. If he took the notion into his head to get up and go out and walk to the top of the street, and then come back and sit down, he did so, but now it appeared that he would have to tell Brenda what he was going to do and why he was going to do it, and perhaps if she did not care to see him do it, sit down and content himself, as his mother would say. Content himself! How could he? Brenda, it seemed, never did anything unless she had a reason for doing it, and she could give an explanation of all her acts. She thought it was very funny that Darkie just wanted to go out, and she was sure it was wrong to give way to impulses like that. And that reminded her—it really would be much better if Darkie were not to talk so often about his seafaring life. Her father had commanded a ship, but Darkie had only been a common sailor, and now that he was settling down to a business life, he would probably be wise not to give people the idea that he was a wayward, rambling sort of man. That story about the prison in America, of course, it was very interesting and even comic, "but really, Darkie, it does you no good as a business man to be known as a person who was once in prison."

"Aha!" he said, comprehendingly.

Brenda had great ideas for their future. He need not imagine that she was the person to stay content in one small shop. Oh, no! Mrs. Dunwoody had fired her mind with more ambitious schemes than that, and Brenda foresaw a day when she and Robert would be the owners of a multitude of shops. In a few years' time, if God spared them, they would take a villa at

Neill's Hill or the Knock. No nice person nowadays lived over a shop! . . .

"Oh!" Robert exclaimed, "an' what about my ma?"

"Mrs. Dunwoody is old-fashioned in her ways," Brenda replied. She persisted in using the formal address for her mother-in-law, a habit which disappointed Mrs. Dunwoody although she did not speak of it. "I wish," Brenda added, "that you wouldn't call your mother 'ma,' Darkie. It's very broad, and, besides, you're too old now to call her 'ma.' "

"We've always called her 'ma'!"

Brenda shrugged her shoulders. "Well, to oblige me," she said, "you might call her mother!"

He soon discovered that Brenda, soft and shy though she seemed, had plenty of force, and he amused himself by discovering identities between her and Mrs. Dunwoody. She was not so direct in her manner or speech as his mother was, and she generally tried to get her own way by insinuating that it was some one else's. He was amused by her question, "Don't you feel a draught, Darkie, dear?" for he knew that she wanted him to shut a window. Sometimes her indirectness irritated him, and he felt like replying, "Damn it, Brenda, if you want the window shut, why don't you say so—or shut it yourself!" But he forebore to make that answer to her. The discipline of the sea did not fail him on the land. Besides, Brenda thought that it was a man's place to do things for women. Brenda liked to see a man doing things that a man ought to do. The proper place for a man was at the head of the table. A man ought always to carve the meat, while the woman served the vegetables. All of these matters were regulated by custom and nice people. The man

always helped the woman off a tramcar although she was quite able to step off it without being helped. It looked well! . . .

"My God, if she says another word about nice people an' things lookin' well, I'll go demented mad!" Robert said to himself, as he listened to a long account of the proper respect due to a woman.

III

It was she who had arranged the details of their honeymoon. They must drive through the Glens of Antrim to Portrush, spending a night at Cushendun. She was undecided whether to take the train to Larne and drive along the coast road, or take the train to Ballymena and change into the narrow-gauge railway to Parkmore, but decided on the latter journey because it would save a double journey in the Glens. It had seemed to Robert, who had never been in the Glens, that if they were as lovely as they were reported to be, a double journey would be an advantage, but Brenda considered that that way of putting the matter was mere frivolity. "If we go from Larne," she said, "we'll have to drive all the way up Glenarriff and all the way down again, but if we go to Parkmore, we'll only have to drive down it. It's a good long distance from Larne!"

"Have it your own way," he murmured.

"But, Darkie, it's not a question of my way; it's a question of what's best for both of us. We can't afford unnecessary expense! . . ."

"Surely to God a man can be extravagant on his honeymoon. I want you to enjoy yourself, Brenda!"

She was touched by his thoughtfulness, and she won

his consent to her plans by cooing over him and telling him how deeply she loved him. There *was* something very likeable about Brenda! . . .

Antrim was unknown to Robert, whose country journeys had been made in Down, and Down had not prepared him for the undisciplined beauty of the northern county. When they descended from the little railway at Parkmore, the station set in a solitude, and he saw the bare bog spread around them, he felt himself full of inexplicable longing to stay there. He wandered towards it while their luggage was strapped on to the long car on which they were to drive down to Cushendun. Brenda called to him, "Don't go far, Darkie!" but he did not reply, and presently she followed him. The earth, broken here and there by pits and trenches from which the turf that stood drying in stacks by their side was dug, was dark and perturbing. The wisps of bog-cotton and bog-myrtle that blew across its darkness scarcely lightened its rich gloom. He felt that the earth must have died, that it was here corrupting, and the sense of foreboding that filled him was increased by the harsh cries of plover whauping over his head. Water was lying in the nearest pit, and it was covered with a queer, coloured scum! . . .

"That's a bog, Darkie!" Brenda informatively said.

They returned to the long car on to which the luggage had been strapped, and joined the other passengers on the long side seats, and, after a little delay, the horses were whipped up and the car started on its journey down the Glen. The scene changed very rapidly from the sombre desolation of the bog to an extraordinary diversity of beauty in the Glen. At one moment they had been staring dejectly at sterile soil, and at the

next they were passing through land that was extravagantly fecund. They drove steadily along a descending road suspended half-way between the hill-top and the bottom of the valley, through a confusion of green and brown growth, past torrents and cascades and lonely cottages, until they reached a bend in the road and saw the Glen opening out to a sea that was as blue as the Mediterranean. The driver of the car, because they were strangers, had waited for them while they went down a path that led from the road to a lovely waterfall called, "The Tears of the Mountain," which fell over a broken rock like a girl's hair blowing in the wind. Above their heads, they could see a white thread of water dropping through green bushes or blowing out on the air like smoke. He wanted to cling to the top of the hillside and dabble his hands in the dropping water! . . .

"Brenda, will we stay here?" he suddenly said to her.

"Stay here!" she exclaimed, looking around her.

"As near as we can," he continued.

"But we've engaged our rooms at Portrush," she expostulated.

"I know, but we can send word to the woman that we're not comin'. We'll pay for them if she can't let them to somebody else."

She returned along the path that led to the road. "Of course we can't stay here," she said. "Come on, Darkie, we're keeping the people waiting."

He took hold of her arm to help her up the slippery path.

"We can stay at Cushendun," he said. "That's not far from here, an' we can come up the Glen every day."

"But we've *arranged* to go to Portrush," she insisted. "We've *arranged* to go there. You can't *arrange* to go to a place and then not go!" It seemed awful to Brenda that a plan should not be fulfilled. "Besides," she said, "you'd get tired of being here! . . ."

"No, I wouldn't!"

"But you would, Darkie. I *know!* And you'll like Portrush!"

They returned to the long car and climbed to their seats and sat in silence while it trundled down to Waterfoot, under the Red Arch, through Cushendall into Cushendun, where they halted for the night. After they had eaten their supper, they walked out through the hedges of fuchsia and strolled, arm in arm, along the sandy beach broken by a little river that was the colour of jade by day but now gleamed darkly as it ran eagerly into the sea, and as they strolled Brenda allowed herself to become again the dependent woman. Robert was the man and must protect her. She allowed her wrap to slide off her shoulders for the pleasure of seeing him restore it to its place. This was marriage for the woman, to be fondled and cared for and indulged and protected. The little bay was beautiful and quiet. The purling river scarcely disturbed them. The sea slowly rolled on to the sand, with a long lapping sound that was like the noise of indrawn breath. Each sound that they heard seemed to add to the quiet of their honeymoon night. They stood for a moment, shivering deliciously in the chilling air, and looked back towards the land. White-washed cottages, with brown roofs, sent faint yellow gleams of light out of their windows and seemed to be leaning against the low hills, blue and brown, behind them. Sometimes a

door would open and the gleam of yellow light would suddenly enlarge. Dogs sleepily barked, and sometimes cattle lowed in the meadows or called from their byres. Robert felt himself moved by the beauty with which he was surrounded, and he drew Brenda's arm further into his own, and led her to a great gray rock that lay in the sand by the side of the river. They sat down without speaking, and Brenda laid her head against his breast. She, too, was moved. They heard a tired cry over their heads and, looking up, saw a bird flying home from the sea. Its snowy breast shone in the descending dusk.

"I love you, Darkie," said Brenda.

He did not answer, but drew her nearer to him. In that moment, Robert loved Brenda.

IV

Presently she stirred and rose. "We'd better go back," she said. "It's getting late, and the people'll wonder where we are!"

He rose, too, and walked up the beach with her towards the house in which they were to spend the night. He put his arm round her, and felt the warmth of her body through the pretty dress she had bought for her marriage. She called it her going-away dress. That apparently was the name used for such a dress by nice people. As they walked, her head inclined towards his, and her hair smelt sweet to him. Momentarily he remembered the smell of Clara's hair, but Brenda's did not smell as hers had done. There was the smell of sweet womanhood in Brenda's hair.

He let his head rest against it. "Darkie," she laughed, without raising her head, "we'll never be able to walk this way. We'll trip each other!"

"It doesn't matter if we do," he replied.

And while his head reclined against hers, he saw faint lights flickering far out on the sea, rising and falling, flashing and fading, and once, for a moment, a single, bright moment, he saw spread sails! . . .

"Take your arm away, Darkie," he heard Brenda murmuring. "We're nearly there, and we'll be seen!"

"I don't care a damn if we are," he replied.

But she withdrew herself from his embrace and ran primly before him towards the house. He turned to look again at the sea, but the spread sails were no longer visible and the faint lights were fainter. He stood hesitating in the darkness, and then walked back to the gray rock on which he and Brenda had been sitting, and climbed to the top of it. The darkness was deeper, and the little murmuring river was as black as the sea, and the hills behind the white-washed cottages were not blue or brown now, but big and black and unfriendly. The lights in some of the cottages no longer gleamed, or gleamed, but more faintly, from bedrooms instead of from kitchens. He could hear little cheeping sounds as birds stirred in their sleep, and sometimes a dreaming dog would utter a low growl! . . . Out there on the running tide a ship was sailing to the south. The sails were all set, and each man had his job appointed to him. While he was standing on that rock, embedded in sand, they were running up the rigging or taking tricks at the wheel or hauling sheets! . . .

A figure appeared in the lit doorway through which Brenda had disappeared, and he heard her voice calling to him.

"Darkie," she said. "Are you not coming in?"

He jumped off the rock and ran across the sand and up the path to the door.

"I wondered where you were," she said. "Come on in. I'm tired and I want to go to bed. The others have gone!"

He did not speak.

"It's so funny of you to stay out there by yourself," she continued. "And us just married. People'll think it's queer! . . ."

"I'm sorry, Brenda," he said. "I thought, mebbe, you'd like to come in first . . . go to bed first, I mean!"

She blushed. "Oh, I . . . I! . . ."

She did not finish her speech.

"Mebbe you'd better go now," he went on, "an' I'll see to the lamp. Am I to bolt the door?"

She nodded her head.

"All right, then!"

She left the room without speaking, and he stood for a while by the door from which he could see across the bay. Lights still flickered on the water! . . .

He closed the door and pushed the bolt into its socket. Then he turned down the wick of the lamp and waited until the light had spurted itself out. He felt his way in the dark to the staircase and climbed to the bedroom. It was in darkness when he opened the door, but he could see Brenda lying whitely in bed.

"You've put out the candle," he said.

"Yes," she whispered.

He did not light the candle, but undressed in the

darkness, dropping his clothes on the floor, and then, when he was ready, he crossed to the bed and drew back the quilt and got in beside her. Her face was turned away from him, and she did not speak or move as he lay down.

"Brenda," he said, touching her with his hand, and turning her towards him. She gave a little sob and he found that her face was wet with tears. "Darlin'," he said, drawing her into his arms and comforting her.

"I'm afeard, Darkie!" she said, and he marvelled to hear her say "afeard."

"All right, Brenda," he murmured, patting her cheek and smoothing her hair. "Just go to sleep! . . ."

He did not speak to her again, and presently he knew that she was asleep. A gleam of moonlight came through the window and lit up the room. Brenda was lying on his arm. Her wet face was beautiful in its distress, and while he watched her, it became happy again and, in her dreams, she smiled. He bent over her and kissed her and then, gently withdrawing his arm, turned on his side and slept.

V

On the next day they drove to Portrush. They drew away from the sea and climbed among wild, tormented hills and moors that were the very soil of sorrow. "It's grand, isn't it, Brenda?" he said to her, but she did not reply, for she was looking dubiously at the mountains and the bogs. "This is the sort of place I'd like to live in," he continued, "wild and empty. Would you like to live here, Brenda?"

"No," she answered, shuddering. "It would depress

me, a place like this. I like to be where there are people and houses and things to do!"

"Aye! Yessss!" he said. "But I like this!"

They came to the vanishing lake, Loughareema, and found it dry. The ground had cracked and the water had disappeared into the earth. Suddenly, the driver said to them, the whole jam-boilin' of water would vanish and the great brown bed on which it had lain would heave up, cracked and torn, and gape, until the rains would pour down and cover it. "The oul' people says it's the fairies does it, but sure I don't believe the like of that talk," the driver concluded. "I'm a bit better educated than some of the people roun' this district—I was a monitor in the school here one time an' had a great notion of bein' a teacher, but somehow I didn't go on with it, an' now I'm drivin' a car. But I remember a lot of my schoolin'. There's a natural explanation of that place, but man dear, it's quare the way visitors'll not hardly listen to it. The most of them prefers a lot of oul' crack about fairies. The Americans is the worst for that kind of talk. Wouldn't you think people like them, now, born an' bred in an up-to-date country, would be above the like of that? But, God bless you, mem, it doesn't matter where people come from, they like to be stuffed wi' a lot o' oul' guff! . . . Come on up er that, now!" he broke off to address the horses. "Come on up er that now!"

They drove through Ballycastle, past the Giant's Causeway and the ruins of Dunluce Castle into Portrush.

"Well, we're here," said Brenda, as they jumped down on to the pavement from the car.

She told him not to bother about the luggage—the

servant would see to that—and instructed him to follow her. He realised that she was in command of them and, and since she understood the business better than he did, he allowed himself to be led by her. The place was grander than he had expected it to be, and he felt overawed by it, but Brenda displayed no signs of anxiety or agitation. He admired the ease with which she conducted them through the complications of the hotel. Brenda certainly knew how to cope with things. He liked to see her ordering the hotel servants about. They might impose on him, but they had no hope of imposing on her. The porter had placed their luggage in one corner of the room, but Brenda immediately ordered him to place it in another for no reason that Robert could discover than to let the man see that she was not a woman to be trifled with. He had had the impudence to choose for himself in what part of the room the luggage should be placed! . . . Very well, Brenda seemed to say, I will show this menial that he must not think for me—I do the thinking in this family—and I will put him to the extra trouble of shifting all this stuff from there to here, not because I particularly wish it to be here—as a matter of fact over there is really more convenient—but simply and solely to teach the man to ask me where things are to be put and not to treat me as if I were a tripper up from Belfast for the day! . . . Robert thought that the fuss was slightly ridiculous, but he had to admit to himself that Brenda conducted the affair with skill and assurance. The man was ready to eat out of her hand when she had finished with him, and he "No, memmed," and "Yes, memmed," her as if she were the Moderator's wife or the Queen of England. Robert had to agree

with her that Portrush was a very nice place and that a great many very nice people stayed in it. It was not so trippery as Pickie—it was further away from Belfast, and not so easily reached—and of course the game of golf, which was becoming very popular, attracted a nice class of people to the town. She had read somewhere that the links in Portrush were the finest in the world. Robert ought to learn how to play golf! . . .

She became friendly with some very nice people called McFarland, who came from Glasgow. "Were you ever in Glasgow, Mr. Dunwoody?" Mrs. McFarland inquired.

"Twice," he said.

"You see," Brenda hurriedly interrupted, "my husband spent seven years in the Merchant Service before he entered business." . . .

"Holy Smoke!" said Robert to himself.

He had been on the point of telling Mrs. McFarland of his adventures on the slag-heaps, but now, saved from that mistake by Brenda's quick wits, he realised, after a glance at her face, that Mrs. McFarland would scarcely appreciate the story. He would do better to hold his tongue and speak only when he was spoken to. Imagine Brenda coming out with that bit about the Merchant Service! Quite true, of course, only that was not quite how he would have put it.

VI

He could not understand why it was not nice of him to get so much entertainment out of listening to the nigger minstrels and the pierrots. People of a certain class were unanimous, he discovered, in considering

minstrels and pierrots to be somewhat vulgar. They had a ruinous effect upon the selectness of a place like Portrush. "All very well for Pickie! . . ." That remark, often made by Brenda, puzzled him, too. What was wrong with Pickie? It seemed to him, whenever he went to it, to be a brisk and jolly place. What if there were crowds of people there? He liked crowds well enough! . .

"But, Darkie, I thought you liked quiet places. When we were at Parkmore you wanted to stay there!" she protested.

"I know. I like quiet places an' I like noisy ones. I like Parkmore an' I like Portrush an' I like Pickie. Why wouldn't I like them? There's a wee place roun' the corner here I foun' yesterday, called Port Ballintrae, as quiet as a mouse. I'd like well to stay there some time!"

Mrs. McFarland had persuaded Brenda to spend the afternoon on Ramore Head with her, and Robert, free to go where he pleased, had walked to Bushmills and the Causeway, and then, returning by the coast, had found Port Ballintrae. Dunluce Castle, suspended above the sea, drew him away from the little village and kept him sitting among its ruins until it was time for him to return to the hotel, but he found himself wishing that Brenda would agree to spend the remainder of their honeymoon in the hotel at Port Ballintrae, lying almost on the rocks over which the sea rolled nearly into its garden. In their room that night he proposed the plan to her, but she told him that he had a very changeable nature. When they returned to Belfast, he found that Brenda had been to the Giant's Causeway once—he and she had drunk water from the

Wishing Well—and to Portstewart once, and once to Carrick-a-Rede and Ballycastle. For the rest of the time Mrs. McFarland and she had sat by the Blue Pool or reclined on Ramore Head and talked about perfectly nice people.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

I

BRENDA loved plans. Her chief pleasure was to put her plans down on paper. She would say to Robert, "You should draw up a scheme, Darkie. Arrange your day. Rise at seven. Open the shop at eight. Tidy it up from eight until nine. Eat your dinner at half-twelve. Go for a walk from one to half-two. The worst of shopkeeping is the men never get enough exercise. I'd hate to see you getting fat, Darkie. Take your tea at six. Shut the shop at half-seven. Bed at half-ten! . . ." She complained of Darkie's irregularity, which, she thought, was odd in a seaman trained to regular ways, and he acknowledged the justice of her complaint. It was quite true that the work could not be done by fits and starts. Cooking became impossible if those who ate the meals came to the table just when the mood seized them. It was queer, he owned, that he who had accepted the discipline of the sea without a murmur and was the first to admit that there should be a place for everything and that everything should be in its proper place on a ship, was so undisciplined on land and apt to behave as if time were unimportant. There was that day when he suddenly walked out of the shop, without a hat or anything, in the middle of the morning, and went trapseing down the docks! . . . "You see, Darkie, dear, you can't carry on your life like that. You've got to have a scheme of some sort!"

"Yes, Brenda, I understand that, only somehow when I'm ashore! . . ."

"There you go, talking like a sailor again. You're not a sailor any more, Darkie, you're a . . . a merchant now. Tell yourself that, and you'll soon get over your contrary ways. I've got our future all mapped out for us, but you'll make it hard for me if you go skylarking about instead of doing your work steady and nice. It's a strange thing to me, Darkie, the great difference there is between you and Alec. He's as punctual as the clock! . . ."

"I know, Brenda, an' this was his shop!"

She changed the subject quickly. "Oh, well, we can't bother about that. My scheme is that we work hard here and build up a good trade and then start another shop. You'll look after it, with the help of a lad, and I'll look after this one. If we're careful, we'll prosper. And listen, Darkie, I want you to do me a favour!"

"Yes?"

"I want you to buy one of those long coats—frock-coats, they're called, that doctors and solicitors wear, and a tall hat! . . ."

"For dear sake, Brenda!"

"To wear on Sundays when we go to meeting. It looks well, Darkie! . . . Now, don't get annoyed with me. You have to think of appearances, and when people see you walking up the church in a tall hat and a frock-coat, they'll think the world and all of you. It's a sign that you're getting on, and you've won half the fight when you've convinced people that you're sure to win it! . . ."

He made a great effort to interrupt her gorgeous

accounts of the prosperity that was to come to them. It would be a good thing for him to take an interest in the Corporation, she was saying, and who knew, if he was smart, that he might not get himself nominated for a councillorship and one of these fine days get elected Lord Mayor!

"Listen, Brenda," he said, breaking in on her almost by force, "there's one thing you've not discussed yet, an' only one!"

"What's that?" she innocently asked.

"Childher!" he replied.

She made an impatient gesture. "Children, Darkie, not childher!"

"Well, children, then. How can you manage all these shops you're talkin' about, an' you rearin' children?"

"Oh, I suppose I can manage," she replied nervously. "We may not have any children—not for a long while, anyway—I'm not so very fond of children!"

"Don't you want any of your own?"

"Oh, yes, some day, of course, perhaps, but there's plenty of time. We're both very young, Darkie, an' we want to build up a business and save money! . . ."

Her speech was nervous and disjointed.

"Listen, Brenda, I want childher—children. There was nothin' said about not havin' any before we were married, an' there'll be nothin' said about not havin' any now."

"Of course not, Darkie, of course not!"

"An' the sooner you're in the family way, the better I'll be pleased! . . ."

She walked away from him offended, pausing only

at the door which separated the shop from the kitchen to say, "You're terribly coarse, Darkie. A person would think to hear you you were ill-reared!"

"Whatever way I was reared, get that in your head, Brenda!"

She shut the door. . . .

Silence fell between them. She helped him to food, but made no conversation, and he returned to the shop, perturbed and uneasy. Perhaps he had spoken roughly to her. He had lived among men for so long that he had difficulty in remembering to adjust his tongue to softer society. Sailors talked among themselves about the supreme facts of life in direct terms. Birth and death were not disguised by inexact words. He must learn to be careful how he mentioned certain matters to Brenda, whose delicacy of mind sometimes bewildered and sometimes annoyed him. The sight of a pregnant woman embarrassed her, and she would avert her eyes from the unseemly spectacle. She affected to be unaware of the imminence of a birth, and blushed terribly when, once before they were married, Robert spoke of the child that his sister Margaret was then carrying. "I hope she'll have a son!" he said. She behaved as if there were something indecent in a woman about to bear a baby, and would even cross the street in a hurry if, when walking with Robert, she spied a pregnant woman approaching her. She maintained a reserve and reticence in their bedroom which puzzled him, and since she resolutely refused to discuss her attitude towards these matters, he could not discover the meaning of it.

"That wasn't the way to talk to her at all," he told himself in the shop as he drilled a hole in a barrel of

lamp-oil and prepared to insert a tap in it. "I must learn the right way to talk to her!"

When she called him to his tea, he went close to her and said, "I'm sorry, Brenda! I didn't mean to offend you! . . ."

And suddenly she was in his arms, wild with weeping.

II

His walks, on which Brenda insisted, were mostly taken through the Harbour. He would cross Cromac Square and go through the Fruit Market because he loved the rich smell of oranges and apples, and walk along the quays from the Queen's Bridge to the end where the cone was hoisted in bad weather. All boats were lovely in his eyes, but he had acquired the contempt which a seaman in a sailing-ship feels for steamships. "Stink-ships," he called them. They were manned, he said, by mechanics, not sailors, and he and his comrades were eloquent on the fatuity of men calling themselves sailors when they crossed the Atlantic time after time without ever seeing the ocean. "Stewards an' stokers, that's the sort they call sailors these times, fellas that would be sick if they saw a wave! I'd like to see that kind in the half-deck with the water pourin' over them, or furlin' a sheet with the win' tryin' to tear it out of their han's. Them fellas sailors! Sailors my gran'ma!" But any boat was better than no boat, and a steamship was undoubtedly a good-looker as she steamed her way through the sea. Lying in the Lagan were cross-channel steamers and occasionally one from a foreign port, smelling richly of queer cargo and tar, and sometimes a sailing-ship. On

the south of the Lagan were the shipyards with new boats rising up from the stocks, while hordes of rivetters and heater-boys swarmed over their sides. This was the cradle of ships. On these mud-flats were conceived and born boats that would sail on every sea in the world! Extraordinary pride filled Robert when he gazed across the river at "the Island" where a great ship was lying on her slip ready to glide out of the stocks into the water. He belonged to the people who made *that!* . . . He would stroll to the end of the quay and return with the sound of hammering in his ears, and feel as if he had listened to great music. Tap, tap! Tap, tap! Tap, tap! That was how the hammers went—a big tap and a little tap, a big tap and a little tap—and then, out of that multitudinous hammering came a ship! God, wasn't it wonderful! He would hurry home and tell Brenda about the lovely noise of the shipyard or the rich, confused smell of a Norwegian barque that he had seen lying in one of the basins . . . and Brenda, listening indifferently, would say, "I declare you're daft about ships. It's a pity you're not more interested in shops. Listen now 'til I tell you the scheme I have in my head! . . ." and out would come a plan to enlarge the frontage. "Of course, shops mean as much to her as ships mean to me," he would say to himself then.

Once, when he was returning along the quays, he encountered a man who had served with him in the China Seas. They stared at each other for a few moments, and then simultaneously advanced with exclamations of pleasure at meeting. The man's name was Scotty, and he was bo'sun on a boat that had carried a heavy cargo from Aberdeen to Belfast. The

short trip satisfied him. He had no desire now, he said, to go on long journeys. Robert took him home with him. "I'm married," he said. "My wife an' me keep a shop that my mother gave me!"

"You've landed on your feet then?" Scotty said.

"Yes, I suppose I have."

"There's no supposin' about it," Scotty asserted. "You have. Have you been married long?"

"Not so long."

"Any family?"

"No."

"Any notion of any?"

"I suppose so . . . some day."

An odd resentment filled him at these inquiries. What business had Scotty to be cross-questioning him like that? He wished now that he had not asked him to come home to tea, not that he minded, but if Scotty started talking any of his coarse talk to Brenda, there would be hell's delight! . . .

Brenda greeted Scotty with civility, and listened patiently while he recalled stormy voyages he had made. They might talk as they liked about the Pacific and the gales that blew round the Horn, but let him tell them this, the Indian Ocean was the masterpiece of oceans and could knock hell out of any sea that ever was sailed. If any man or woman wanted to know what rough water was like just let him or her take a trip from Cape Town to Australia and they'd get a taste of rough water. Or they could take a trip from the Cape of Good Hope to Calcutta and see how they liked that! . . . He poured his tea into his saucer to cool it, and then drank it with a long sucking sound that grated horribly on Brenda's nerves. And he seemed

to devour his food. He would thrust the better part of half a farl of soda-bread into his enormous mouth, that seemed to be full of yellow, nicotined teeth, and then crunch it noisily! . . .

"What in the earthly world made you bring that man here?" Brenda demanded, blazing with anger, when he had gone.

"Him an' me served on the same ship once! . . ."

"What's that got to do with it? If you were working in the shipyard you wouldn't bring the whole island here, would you?"

"No, an' I didn't bring the whole crew home!" . . .

"I'm in no mood for comic talk," she interrupted. "I'm sick, sore and tired of hearing about the sea, and I won't have any dirty sailors sitting at my table!"

"Dirty!"

"Yes, dirty. The man was filthy from top to toe. His big hands were yellow with oil and his nails made me feel sick. And the way he ate his food was a disgrace to a human being. Sucking his tea like a horse!"

He felt drenched by the flood of talk that she poured over him.

"What possessed you to bring him here, I don't know. My father would have been pleased, I can tell you, to see a common sailor sitting at his daughter's table!"

"You're married to a common sailor!" Robert shouted at her.

"You're not a common sailor," she retorted. "I wouldn't have married you if you'd been a common sailor. You belong to a good family, and anyway you've done with the sea. Do you hear me, Darkie, you've done with it."

"I hear you!" He turned abruptly away from her and put on his cap.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Out!"

"Where?"

"Anywhere out of this!"

She put out her hand to restrain him. "But what about the shop?" she said.

"Damn the shop!" he replied, throwing her hand off his arm.

He was half-way across the long bridge before he realised that he was going towards his mother's shop.

"But what's the good of that!" he said aloud. "It was her egged me into this!"

Nevertheless, he continued on his way. Alec was standing at the door of the shop talking to a customer, who departed as Robert approached.

"Is that you, Bob?" Alec said.

"Aye, it's me. Is my ma in?"

"She's upstairs in the return room!" They still called the little kitchen at the end of the stairs "the return room."

Robert entered the shop and ran up the stairs and found his mother sitting in front of the fire. He saw that she was old and tired. Her eyes were worn, and she seemed to have no strength left in her body. A black woollen shawl lay around her shoulders, and when she rose to kiss him, it dropped to the ground, as if it, too, were tired.

"How're you, ma?" he said.

"Rightly, son," she replied. She hesitated for a few seconds, scanning his face as she did so. Then she said, "Were you wantin' to speak to me?"

"No, ma, no. I just thought I'd walk this length an' see how you were. That was all."

"Sit down then!" She resumed her seat and motioned him to a chair. "I'm glad to see you. Is Brenda all right?"

"She's well enough!"

He inquired about trade, about Mattie, about Margaret, about their children, about Alec, and she replied briefly to his questions. Yes, thank God, trade was good, Mattie was well, Margaret was in the best of health—she and Sam were thinking of taking a cottage at Pickie for the summer—and Alec was just the same. Alec was always just the same. There was never no differs in Alec! . . .

Did she think he had become reconciled to losing the branch?

It was not his shop to lose, so why should he have to reconcile himself to losing it! . . .

He did not answer that question, nor did she expect him to answer it. Neither of them spoke for a while. It was strange, she thought, that after all her years of longing for Robert's return she should have so little to say to him when they met. It was strange, he thought, that when he was pining to tell her of his distress he should have so much difficulty in finding words. He looked at her, as she sat with her gray head resting on her upturned hand. She was his mother, yet she was almost a stranger to him. There was no one in this world whom he loved as he loved her, yet he could not tell her of this simple trouble that had come between Brenda and him. His instinct was to come to her when he was puzzled or unhappy, yet when he came to her, he sat dumbly before her or awkwardly

making remarks about matters that were of no interest to either of them. He wanted to go to her and put his arms around her and say, "Ma, *you* know the way I feel about things, don't you? What's wrong with me that Brenda can't understand, too?" But he was incapable of doing it. She turned again to look at him, and he was aware of sorrow in her eyes. She seemed to him to be older than any one in the world, to be older than any one that had ever been in the world! . . .

"Have you nothin' to say to me, son?" she said.

He fumbled with his words as he replied, "No, ma, nothin'!"

"Is Brenda goin' to have a child?"

He shook his head.

"Why? What ails her?"

"She doesn't want one! . . ."

Her voice became firm. "Doesn't want one! What sort of a woman is it doesn't want a child?"

"I don't know, ma, but Brenda's the sort, whatever it is!"

"I see!"

She drummed on the arm of her chair for a few moments. When she spoke, she seemed to have forgotten what they had been talking about. "It's quare," she said, "how contrary things are. I'm a fortunate woman, as any person would believe, yet I can never remember in my life that anything turned out the way I wanted it to turn out. There's times when I'm just tired, tired, *tired.* I've striven an' contended, but God only knows what it was I strove for, an' why I was contendin'. Do you ever wonder about yourself, Robert?"

"Many an' many's a time, ma!"

"An' do you ever fin' out any explanation?"

"No."

"Neither do I. Oh, well!"

She rose and looked at a pot which was sitting on the fire. It was full of potatoes. "They'll be ready in a minute," she said. "You an' me," she continued, " 'll have just a wee bite of supper the way we used to have when you were a wee fella. Potatoes an' butter an' salt. They were very nice, weren't they, son?"

"Aye."

She made a gesture of supplication to him. "If I could only have kept you without! . . . But my heart was scalded, son, an' I was sore afeard you'd go away again', an' mebbe I'd never see you no more. Seven years you went away from me, an' I prayed to God every night of them years that He'd spare me until you come home. An' He spared me, but I wonder was it any use?"

Suddenly he felt that their positions were changed. Hitherto she had been the stronger of the two. He had always felt that he was a boy when she was present, but now he felt that he had the strength and that she was too frail to do other than depend upon him. He took her in his arms, and she clung to him.

"I won't be long, son," she said. "You'll stay 'til I go?"

"Stay?"

"Yes. I know what's in your heart! . . ."

Alec came up the stairs. He had shut the shop for the night, and was ready for his supper. He saw his mother in his brother's arms. Darkness passed across his eyes, and his tongue seemed to be parched. He turned as if he were about to descend the stairs again,

but his mother stopped him. "Here's Alec," she said to Robert, "clamourin' for his meat."

They sat down at the table—Mattie was spending the evening with friends—and ate the potatoes and butter and salt.

"Do you ever have suppers like this in Cromac Street?" said Mrs. Dunwoody.

"No. Brenda's very particular about the way people eat."

"Well, that's right," Alec said. "Brenda knows the way things should be done. There's breedin' in Brenda."

"Aye," said Mrs. Dunwoody, dipping a potato in the salt, "but what's breedin' if you have no spirit an' are afeard to live?"

"I don't understand you, ma," Alec replied.

"Don't you, son? Well, no matter for that. Will I give you some more potatoes?"

"I've enough, thank you," said Alec.

They sat for a while, after they had eaten their supper, talking of trifles, though each was aware that the other had things of importance to say, and finally Robert rose to leave them. "I must be movin'," he said, standing awkwardly before his mother.

"I'm goin' back to Donaghreagh," she replied.

"Is that a fact?"

"Aye. I'm givin' the shop to Alec an' Mattie! . . ."

He sat down abruptly. "Then you *are* sick," he said. "You toul' me you were all right, but you're sick! . . ."

"I have a quare cravin' to go back there. That's all, son! I don't understand it myself, an' I can't explain, but if the whole world stood up fornenst me, I'd still have to go. There's nothin' I need now, an'

nothin' I want that I'm likely to get, an' somehow it doesn't seem to matter. Wantin' things is a terrible torment. You wanted to run roun' the worl', an' I wanted you to stay here . . . but what was the good of our wantin'? We must just do what we have to do!"

"You were never the one to throw up your han's, ma, an' surrender or run!" Robert said.

"No, I never done that, though there were times, mebbe, when I would have been wise if I had," she acknowledged.

"An' you'll not run now. Will she, Alec?"

"She'll do whatever she wants," Alec replied.

She got up from her chair and put her hand on Alec's shoulder affectionately. "Poor Alec," she murmured. Then she turned to Robert. "Away home to your wife," she said to him. "Brenda has breedin', as Alec says, an' brains too, an' she'll make a gran' career for you, but she's a fool, tell her from he, that'll never know her folly 'til it's too late. An' you're not much better, son. Give me your arm, Alec, an' help me up the stairs. I'm goin' to my bed. Good-night, Robert!"

"Good-night, ma!"

Alec helped her up the short flight of stairs that led from the kitchen to her bedroom, and when he had opened the door for her and lit the gas, he came back to the kitchen where Robert still stood.

"She's failin' on it," he said.

"When is she goin' to Donaghreagh?" Robert asked.

"At the end of the week. Mattie's takin' her. Will you wait 'til Mattie comes in?"

"No, I think I'll be goin'. You an' me never seemed to hit it off thegether, Alec."

"No, we didn't!"

"Quare, isn't it?"

"Aye!"

"Well, good-night, Alec!"

"Good-night, Bob!"

He went down the stairs and walked through the shop to the street-door. The years were obliterated, and he saw himself again a boy running down those stairs in a rage and flinging open the door and running into the street with Alec pursuing him! . . . Well, what had to be had to be. He opened the door and passed into the street.

III

Brenda was waiting for him, her face white with apprehension and stained with tears. She seemed like a child as she held out her arms to him, and she sobbed as he folded his about her.

"I don't want anything in the world but you," she said.

When they were in bed, and she, snuggling against him, was asleep, he thought, "My ma tried to own me an' I ran away from her. An' now Brenda's tryin' to own me. What am I goin' to do?"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

I

Mrs. Dunwoody had been living in Donaghreagh for nearly two months when Brenda's mother died, leaving Brenda three thousand pounds. The amount of the bequest astonished Brenda as much as it astonished everybody else. She had grown up in the knowledge that her mother had means, but had never known the extent of them nor had Mrs. Cairnduff ever informed her of them. She was able to forget some of her grief at her mother's death in planning what should be done with the money. The shop in Cromac Street suddenly seemed insignificant to her. It was all very well for a beginning, but an ambitious person could not be expected to content herself in it. Three thousand pounds would make a world of difference to their position. If Robert would pay attention to her for a minute or two, she would tell him what her scheme was. She had heard a report that Mr. Boal, who had the shop in High Street, was in the notion of retiring and would be glad to sell the goodwill of his business for a reasonable sum. The shop was big and well-placed and did a wholesale as well as a retail trade. Her idea was to develop the wholesale side of the business. If Alec and Robert were to go into partnership! . . .

"Alec an' me could never work thegether!" he objected.

"You could work together rightly if you tried. Anyway, this is the scheme."

The shops in Pottinger's Road and Cromac Street were to be managed by Mattie and Brenda, while Robert and Alec managed the shop in High Street. There was a very smart young assistant in Mr. Boal's shop who could be encouraged to take a greater interest in the business by being promoted to the rank of traveller. He would go round the country, soliciting orders from shopkeepers, while Robert himself could serve as a town traveller in the intervals of attending to the shop. There were a lot of small businesses scattered about the city, up the Falls Road and the Shankhill and over in Ballymacarrett and up the Lisburn Road and the Antrim Road, that had to draw their supplies from a place like Mr. Boal's. Robert could attend to them. The High Street shop would shut much earlier than the Pottinger's Road and the Cromac Street shops, and so Alec and Robert, just when their help was most needed in them, would be able to assist Mattie and her in the evenings. They could thus afford to develop the High Street shop without running the risk of losing the minor shops. In time, no doubt, they could sell these or put managers into them.

"Alec an' me would never work thegether," Robert objected again.

"We'll see about that," Brenda said.

II

And Brenda saw about it. Alec was prevailed upon. In what appeared to be a brief while, Mr. Boal found himself living in retirement at Ballynafeigh where, for

he had acquired no interest in life apart from his business, he wilted and died in less than a year. A thrill of pride ran through Mrs. Dunwoody when the news was announced to her that her sons had entered into partnership in a shop in High Street, though her pride was slightly reduced by the reflection that Brenda, not she, had achieved this victory. "It was the money," she said to console herself. "I never had that amount to spare!" Her pride revived, however, and even increased when she saw the shop, big and deep, with the name "DUNWOODY" in large, curly golden letters on the façia, Alec had wished the name to be "DUNWOODY BROS.," but Brenda had insisted on the surname alone. She thought it had a finer sound by itself. Handbills had been distributed in every part of the city, bearing the injunction, "Go To Dunwoody's For It." There would have been nothing in that to remember, she said, if it had read, "Go To Dunwoody Bros. For It." She was ingenious at devising advertisements. Alec had proposed to her that they should repeat the old device of sending out a sensational bill in which certain words were printed in big, heavy type and separated from each other by a lot of words in small type, so that at the first glance the bill would appear to inform those who read it of "A SHOCKING CRIME IN HIGH STREET," but, when read through, would only inform them that the cost of goods in other shops was so shocking that any reasonable person would feel justified in calling it a crime were it not for the fortunate fact that much cheaper and better goods could be purchased at Dunwoody's in High Street.

"It's a great gag a bill like that," said Alec.

"It would be if any person would bother to read it,"

Brenda replied. "Who's going to wade through this stuff? The people'll just read the big words and throw the bill away."

"You're mebbe right," Alec said, ruefully regarding his manuscript.

"There's no mebbe about it. I am," Brenda said. "That kind of a bill's been done to death. We want something that people will remember! . . ."

And so she invented "Go To Dunwoody's For It." And when she was tired of that advertisement, she issued a new one, "You Want It. Dunwoody's Have It." She advertised the fact in the *Evening Telegraph* in a long strip across the bottom of a page. She paid an outrageous sum to have it inserted in the middle of the football reports in *Ireland's Saturday Night.*

"The idea," she said, "is to make the name of Dunwoody known everywhere. Once they get it into their heads, it'll stop there!"

The most famous of her mottoes, as she called them, was the one which said, "You Want a New Mug. Get It At Dunwoody's."

Belfast laughed at that, and made a catch-phrase out of it. Men, when they met in the morning, no longer said, "You're not lookin' very grand on it the day!" but "You Want a New Mug! Get it at Dunwoody's!" Mr. Warden made a comedian say it in the pantomime at the new theatre in Great Victoria Street, which was called the Grand Opera House and started as a sort of circus. It was a great gag, people said! . . .

Mrs. Dunwoody felt herself loving Brenda when she saw these signs and wonders. This was the daughter she would have desired, a woman with a head on her full of enterprise and courage, with her mind set on

advancement, a masterful woman. It was a strange thing, she thought, that neither of her own daughters should have inherited any mastery from her, while this seemingly soft girl, daughter to a soft woman, should have all the resource of ambition she herself had had. Mattie and Margaret had been wilful enough when they were young, but they were no more than wilful, nor did their ambition carry them any further than a man and a home and babies. Brenda had wanted her man too, and had got him, but he was not the end of her ambition! . . . It was queer, though, that Brenda did not want any children. Brenda's future, when she foretold it, had no babies in it. She saw "Dunwoody" written on the sign-boards of a hundred shops, but she saw no child to inherit them! . . .

"But, Brenda, what's the good of makin' a business, if there's nobody to carry it on!" Mrs. Dunwoody once protested.

She had not found it easy to talk to Brenda at all on the subject, for Brenda had a way of freezing when it was mentioned.

"Somebody'll carry it on," Brenda replied. "Mattie and Margaret have children! . . ."

"They're not Dunwoodys," Mrs. Dunwoody objected.

"Are you making a god of the name? They can change their names if that's all you want. Forby, Alec'll mebbe marry!"

"You know well that Alec'll never marry! . . ."

Brenda did not reply to that, but her eyes were full of pleasure, and Mrs. Dunwoody, seeing the pleasure, thought to herself, "She's enjoyin' that. She likes to think she has Alec under her thumb, though she doesn't

care a thrush's mick about him. She's cruel. She'll let him lie down before her, an' she'll walk on his face and wipe her boots on him!"

"But, Brenda," she insisted, "do you not want a child of your own?"

"No," said Brenda decisively, "I don't. I've got Darkie and the shop. I want no more!"

"I can't make you out. You love Robert, don't you?"

Brenda flashed at her. "What makes you ask such a foolish question when you know I worship the ground he walks on!"

"Well, don't you want to have a baby by him!"

"No. That's not my way of loving him."

"Strange!" said Mrs. Dunwoody. "Quare an' strange! When I was married on my man I used to pray to God that I'd have a lot of children by him, an' I was thankful glad when I knew the first was comin'. Listen, Brenda, I'm goin' to tell you somethin'. Mebbe you'll think me coorse an' common for it, but it's the God's truth I'm goin' to tell you, an' you can think what you like. When I was carryin' Alec I used to get out of bed in the early mornin' an' stan' naked before the glass an' look at myself. An' I was a proud an' thankful woman when I saw myself gettin' bigger an' bigger! . . ."

"Oh, quit, quit!" Brenda cried. "I hate to hear you talking that way. I hate the thought of all that . . . ugliness!"

"Ugliness!" said Mrs. Dunwoody, dismayed.

"Yes! Yes!" Brenda replied, turning away.

They did not speak for a few moments. Then Mrs.

Dunwoody broke the silence. "I'll not mention the matter again," she said. "I don't understand this. I don't understand it. I just don't understand it!"

III

The business thrived. Brenda had altered some of the details of her scheme. Her first intention had been that she should take charge of the shop in Cromac Street, but the attractions of High Street were too many for her. A girl was engaged to assist in Cromac Street so that Brenda might be free to supervise all three shops. She spent the morning and part of the afternoon in High Street, the remainder of the afternoon in Pottinger's Road, and the evening in Cromac Street. Already she was planning to buy established businesses in other parts of the city. There was a shop in the Ormeau Road, owned by one of her High Street customers, that would soon, she thought, fall into her hands. The man who owned it was a "footerer," and she was nearly certain that he would presently have trouble in paying his debts. He owed her a pretty penny, but she was not worrying her head about that. The shop would be cheap at the price! . . . She sold the Cromac Street shop, and then, when its new owner found himself in difficulties, bought it back from him at less than he had paid for it and employed him at a low wage to manage it for her. She bought a semi-detached villa at Bloomfield, where new houses were being built, and she and Robert travelled to town by the County Down Railway.

"Listen, Darkie," she said to him one morning, "I've a great scheme in my head. One of these days we'll

own a shop in every town in the North. We'll start one in Derry next year, and build up a connexion in Tyrone and Donegal. Look at this!"

She produced a map of Ulster. Red rings were drawn around a number of towns; Ballymena, Larne, Portrush, Coleraine, Derry, Letterkenny, Strabane, Enniskillen, Omagh, Dungannon, Cookstown, Newry, Portadown, Lurgan, Armagh, Newtownards, Hollywood and Bangor; in each of which, within five years' time, she said, the name of "DUNWOODY" would flash from a sign-board.

"Oh, aye!" said Robert, indifferently.

"And we won't stop in the North," she continued, her mind on fire with ambition. "We'll go south to Dublin and Cork. I'll not be happy until I have our name known up and down the length of Ireland. And mebbe across the water!"

"Oh, aye!" said Robert again.

"We're getting on, Darkie!" she exclaimed gleefully.

"Gettin' on where?" he asked.

She looked at him blankly. "Getting on," she said. "On! We're a success!"

"Huh!" said Robert.

They had left the train and were sitting in the ferry-boat waiting to be taken across the Lagan to Albert Square. From the Ferry steps to the shop in High Street was a short walk.

"Does Alec know about this scheme?" Robert said.

"Not yet!" she replied.

"What do you think he'll say about it?"

"I didn't stop to wonder," was her answer. "He'll do whatever I suggest!"

He laughed at that. "It's a quare pity you didn't

marry Alec," he said. "He's more amenable to you than I am."

She flushed with vexation. "That's not a nice way to talk," she exclaimed.

They did not speak again until they had reached the shop where they found Alec already at work.

"There's a young lady waitin' to see you, Bob!" Alec said.

"Who is she?" Brenda demanded.

"Dawson's daughter!"

Dawson was the shopkeeper who lived on the Ormeau Road.

"Oh! And what does she want?"

Alec did not know. The girl had asked for Robert!

"I'll see her," Brenda said.

"It's me she wants to see, Brenda," Robert interrupted.

"You've got other things to attend to. It's likely she's come about her father's account. I expect he's near the end of his tether. We'll have that shop of his before long. I'll talk to her. She might make a softy of you, Darkie, but she'll not make a softy of me!"

Robert took hold of her arm and held her back.

"Just a minute, Brenda," he insisted. "It's me she wants to see, not you. When she wants to see you, she'll ask for you, an' when a person asks for me, I'll attend to her!"

"Oh, well, if you're set on seeing her!" Brenda laughed nervously. "Only don't promise her what she won't get!"

"Where is she, Alec?"

"I have her up there in the countin'-house out of the way of the sweepin'! . . ."

Brenda hesitated for a moment. Then she said, "I'll not take off my things. I'll walk over to Cromac Street and see how things are there, and mebbe by the time I get back you'll have got rid of her. I daresay it'll be better for me not to see her. You can just tell her the matter's out of your control, Darkie. If her father can't pay what he owes, we'll have to bankrupt him!"

He did not answer, but walked towards the counting-house where Dawson's daughter was awaiting him. Brenda, after a few words to Alec, set out for Cromac Street.

IV

The girl, whom Robert had seen several times in her father's shop, was sitting nervously on the edge of a chair. Her age was about twenty, but the look of anxiety on her face made her seem older than her age.

"She's pretty," Robert thought, as he hung his hat on the rack behind the door. "Good-mornin', Miss Dawson," he said aloud.

She stood up and said, "Good-mornin', sir!" The word, "Sir," arrested him. He had not expected that deference from her, and he told himself that the girl was distressed and anxious to propitiate him.

"It's a brave day," he continued, since she did not say any more.

"Yes," she replied, smiling wanly.

"You wanted to see me! . . ."

"Yes, Mr. Dunwoody. It's about my father!"

"Oh, indeed! How is he?"

"He's bad, Mr. Dunwoody. He's not well at all. We've had a terrible lot of trouble lately!"

"I'm sorry to hear that! . . ."

"An' he asked me to call in an' see you, Mr. Dunwoody, an' ask you if you'd give us a wee bit more time to pay our account! . . ."

Robert drummed with his fingers on the desk. "Well, you see," he said, "it's not quite in my power. I'm only the traveller."

"Oh, but Mr. Dunwoody! . . ."

"However, I'll put the matter to the other members of the firm, Miss Dawson, an' I'll see what can be done. I can't promise no more!"

"Thank you, sir," she replied. "I'm sure it's kind of you. I'm very much obliged to you!" She walked towards the door, and then suddenly turned to him. "My father's been very sick, Mr. Dunwoody! That's as true as you're there, an' it would kill him if he was to be bankrupted!"

"There's no need to upset yourself," Robert exclaimed. Her distress embarrassed him. The girl looked so young and yet so burdened with responsibility that he wanted to comfort her with the assurance that there was no occasion for anxiety. Her father should have time to turn round! . . .

Her eyes were full of tears. "I'm sorry to bother you," she said, "but I can't thole it any longer!"

He patted her on the shoulder. "There, there," he said. "You'll be all right. I'll do what I can!"

"Thank you, sir!" she said, and then she went.

It annoyed him that she should have said "Sir."

He did not see Brenda until the afternoon.

"Well," she said, "what did Dawson's daughter want?"

"More time," he replied.

"She can want," Brenda said abruptly.

"They're a bit hard pressed, Brenda. The father's been sick this while past. I know that for a fact, an' they've had a lot of trouble. I think we might give them a while longer!"

Brenda sat back in her chair. "Did she cry?" she said.

"Aye!"

She leant forward again and laughed. "I thought as much. Anybody'd get round you with a tear or two. They can't have any more time, Darkie. They've had more than enough. Forby, I want that shop!"

"But, Brenda! . . ."

"I want that shop, Darkie." She spoke each word with heavy emphasis. "Tell Alec I want him!"

He called Alec to the counting-house and, at Brenda's request, told him what had happened.

"Well, Alec," she exclaimed when the recital was finished, "what's your advice?"

"Whatever you say yourself, Brenda. It's a good shop, with a lot of possibilities."

"Yes, and Dawson will never discover them. I tell you, Darkie, that man's no good. It's not his sickness that's put him in this mess; it's his own incompetence, and the sooner we settle him the better. How much time does she want us to give him?"

"A month or two! . . ."

"Yes, and at the end of it he'll be shouting for more time, and his daughter'll be weeping her eyes out. What does she do?"

"She used to work in a wareroom, I think, but since her mother died she's been at home, lookin' after the place!"

"Would she be any good in the shop, do you think?"

"How do I know? I hardly know the girl!"

"Huh! Well, you can go up and tell her father he can't have a minute. That's all. Not another word. I'll see him myself next week! . . ."

"Then you will be gentle with him, Brenda?" Robert exclaimed.

"It all depends on what you call gentle. I want that shop, and I'm going to get it . . . next week. Now, listen, Darkie, it's no good talking soft and sentimental. You know as well as you're living that that man's a footerer. He can't get on. He'd no call to start a shop at all; he's the sort that's born to serve, not to control, and it's a piece of impertinence for that sort to aspire to positions they can't hold. Ask your mother! I've talked to her about these things, and it's a great pity you don't pay the heed to her that I do. There's people that can rule and there's people that can't. I'm one of the sort that can, and Dawson's one of the sort that can't, and if he wants any peace in the world he'll recognise that fact and abide by it. I might let him work for me! . . ."

"Very good, Brenda. It doesn't matter to me. I'm not well acquainted with the man, but I feel a bit sorry for the girl!"

"Oh, yes! You wouldn't feel half so sorry if she was a boy. Dawson had the right notion in his head when he sent her to see you, but he forgot about me!"

He left her, and started on his journey to Dawson's. His mind was bewildered by Brenda. In business hours, she was a totally different woman from the Brenda he had known before his marriage to her, a harder, more resolute, fiercely ambitious Brenda. He

found himself both attracted to, and repelled by, the merchant Brenda. He liked her resolution and the ferocity with which she pounced on the thing she desired, but he hated to see the hard, lustful look in her eyes as she turned down her thumb on some ineffectual trader such as Dawson. The contempt in her voice when she spoke of Dawson's daughter as a mere sniveller offended him. True, the girl did cry in her distress, and undoubtedly Dawson was a muddler and a fool, but a world full of hard, resolute Brendas would be a cheerless one. That girl's soft, silly face and her big tearful eyes stirred him to compunction. It was not her fault that she was sloppy and weak and unable to put up a fight for herself. When she was in trouble she just wept. Well, that was her way of living, and what was the good of sneering at her or condemning her when she knew of no better way or was incapable of following it if she did. Brenda herself had her sloppy times. It was all very well for her now, full of her business ability and proud of her skill in trade, to despise Dawson's daughter—he could not remember her Christian name—but she had not always been a masterful woman, able to hold her own in a deal or a battle. What about that night at Cushendall when she had cried herself to sleep in his arms. Even now, at home, she would baby-talk to him. "I don't love no one but 'oo, Darkie. I'se yous little Brendy-Wendy! . . ." The business men who "Yes, memmed!" her and listened very respectfully to what she had to say to them would suffer a shock if they could hear Brenda baby-talking! . . . "Does nauky Darkie-parkie love his ickle Brendy-Wendy? . . ." And he would baby-talk back to her, and put his arms round her and cuddle

her close to him, and she would say, "I don't want anything but this, Darkie, never anything but this! . . ." She was a puzzle-the-world, soft and hard! . . . Perhaps Dawson's daughter had her hard spots, too. Who knew but that she led her father a hell of a life, nagging at him for his inefficiency and his failure? That was the way with women, never content until they had turned a man into a piece of property that they could exploit. "This is my man! I own him. He makes more money for me than your man makes for you. I can turn him round my little finger! . . ." Well, that was the way of it, and what was the use of grumbling! He dared say Dawson's daughter! . . . What was the damned girl's name? He remembered to have heard it mentioned by her father. But no matter! Whatever her name was, he dared say she was like the rest of the women, unhappy until she had got possession of a fellow and was able to run about the town showing off her bit of property. "I own this! Don't you wish you owned it?"

He stopped on the Ormeau bridge, and looked up the Lagan towards the locks on the canal. Very vividly in his mind he could see the bargee at whom he had thrown the clod of earth on that morning when he had run away from home. Dead now, no doubt! A man like that was sure to drink himself into the grave in no time at all. That was a queer day. Everything was coming back to him now. He had walked barefooted through a dewy field and had lain on the big stones in the Giant's Ring and had bribed a boy to upset the pile of buckets outside Alec's shop—which was now his and Brenda's shop. He had been all over the world since then and led a most extraordinary life.

Not a bad life either—a fine life when you came to think about it—better than this running around with a notebook soliciting orders for crockery and delf and hardware! . . . He glanced at his watch. He must be getting along. The sooner this affair with Dawson was settled the better.

V

Dawson, undoubtedly, was a footerer. Brenda was perfectly right about him—an oul' jenny-jo of a man, with a weak white face and a perpetual whine. Wasn't it hard at his time of life to have to turn to and start all over again . . .? What a man! God knew, he said, how hard he had tried, but nothing ever went well with him. All that troubled him was what he called his good name. He would be eternally disgraced if he were to be put into the Bankruptcy Court. His single solution of his problem seemed to be that Brenda should wait for her money for ever! . . . Oh, let him be bankrupted! What did the fate of a fool like that matter! Brenda was right—if a man could not pull his weight, then he should be thrown overboard.

"Have you any prospect of bein' able to pay your account, Mr. Dawson?" Robert had asked him.

"Oh, aye, aye," he had replied with the ease and heartiness of the man who is convinced that everything will be all right some day.

"When?"

"Oh, in time! . . ."

"What time? How much time?" Robert marvelled to hear himself rapping out these questions.

"Well, I couldn't just say to a day or two—in a month, mebbe, or three months, perhaps!"

Robert rose from his seat. "I see," he said, and prepared to go. In a month, mebbe, or three months, perhaps, the big footering fool! . . .

"Good-night," he said, going towards the door.

"Oh, good-night, Mr. Dunwoody, good-night! I suppose it'll be all right?"

"I'll mention the matter," was all that Robert would say.

"You'll excuse me not seein' you to the door. I'm bad. But Sadie'll see you out! . . ."

Sadie! So that was what he called her! Short for Sarah, he supposed! . . . He turned to the girl who had risen at her father's words. "I won't trouble you, Miss Dawson," he said. "I can find my own way. Good-night!" He held out his hand to her, but she would not take it.

"I'll come with you," she insisted.

"Mr. Dunwoody," she continued, when they were at the street-door, "is it any use?"

"You know it's not," he replied.

Her eyes filled with tears. She was a great girl for crying! . . .

"Couldn't you give us a month? . . ."

"Look here, Miss Dawson, you know as well as I do that it's no good. I'd gladly recommend a month or three months if I thought your father wasn't just postponin' events, but he'd be in no better position than he is now if he had the whole of time offered to him. The man's not equal to the job!"

"He's my father, Mr. Dunwoody!" she remonstrated.

"I'm not discussin' him as your father. I'm discussin' him as a business man. That's all the interest I have in him, an' you know better than anybody that matters

won't improve; they'll get worse. If he retires now, he can go out with some credit, but a month from now, he'll go out with none. It's a waste of time an' money an' pity to try to bolster him up, an' you'd do better to recommend him to sell out while he has the chance, an' not wait til be put out. If he's agreeable, tell him to come down an' see my wife as soon as possible an' she'll arrange somethin'!"

"You're quare an' hard, Mr. Dunwoody!"

"Hard! Is a man bein' hard when he recognises a fact?"

She did not answer. She turned away, and as she turned, he saw that the tears were running down her cheeks. There she was, crying again! Some women could turn the tap on quare an' easy.

"I'm sorry if I sound hard," he continued, "but I don't mean to be. Your father'll never manage his way. That's as true as you're standin' there, an' well you know it!"

"What's to become of us, Mr. Dunwoody?" she said, looking up at him with bewildered eyes.

Her helplessness appalled him and made him angry. What did it matter to him what became of them? But he did not say anything.

"God knows what's to become of us," she wailed.

He had it on the tip of his tongue to ask her why she imagined that God cared what happened to her footering father or to her, but instead he said, "Mebbe your father could get a job under somebody. You ought to be able to get somethin'!"

"It's a quare come-down," she continued, "to work for another person after you've worked for yourself."

"Plenty of people has to make it," he replied.

"If only we had a wee bit more time! . . ." she murmured, and as she did so, he seemed to hear the weak, wailing voice of her father whining at him. Was she going to start that blether all over again?

"Good-night, Miss Dawson," he said decisively.

"Oh, good-night, Mr. Dunwoody!" she replied, and this time she held out her hand to him. "What am I to tell my father when I go in?"

"Tell him to sell the shop to my wife for the best price he can get, an' ask her if she can give him a job of some sort!"

A fresh flood of tears fell out of her eyes. A girner, that was what she was, a gowler and a girner! . . . But the extraordinary thing was that he wanted to take her in his arms and comfort her. When she turned her big, tear-filled eyes up at him, he wanted to dabble them with his handkerchief, and very terribly he wanted to kiss her moist lips.

"Good-night to you!" he said, turning quickly away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

I

On the following morning, Sadie Dawson again waited in the High Street shop for the arrival of Brenda and Robert. Her father, with great reluctance and much anguish of mind and spirit, had made his decision; he would sell the shop and its goodwill for whatever they were worth.

"I'll come up," said Brenda, "and value the place!"

And immediately Sadie and she started off for the Ormeau Road, taking the Cromac Street shop on the way.

The transaction was soon settled. Virtually Dawson's business already belonged to Brenda, but she foresaw possibilities of development in it which might be withheld from her if Dawson were bankrupted and some other person acquired his premises. It was better, she thought, to lose a little money and get the shop, than lose the shop and get a better settlement of the debts by bankruptcy. She would give Dawson a job in High Street at twenty-five shillings a week. Alec needed somebody to be at hand when Robert and she were away. As for the girl, she could go back to her wareroom! . . .

"You agree, Darkie, don't you?" she said.

"Oh, aye," he answered. "I think you're right.

Dawson's no earthly good except to be ordered about. The man's a tow-rag!"

"And that daughter of his, Sadie?"

"A wareroom'll do her no harm. But what do you ask me about her for? I take no interest in her."

"I just wanted your approval, Darkie. Alec agrees with me absolutely!"

"Alec always does!"

She glanced at him quizzically. "You have a quare contempt for Alec, haven't you?" she said.

"Me! Oh, no! Not at all! His nature's not the same as mine. That's all!"

"Nobody'd think you were the one blood, you two. But, mind you, Darkie, Alec's not to be disrespected. He has great application! Trade's like a woman to him. I do believe he'd be ready to shed his heart's blood for this shop. That sounds foolish! . . ."

"It does," said Robert.

"But it's the gospel truth. And after all is one kind of love much better than another kind? I sometimes think, Darkie, it doesn't matter what you're prepared to die for, so long as you're prepared to die. I wonder to myself many's a time if it's really any finer to be willin' to get killed in a war for your country than it is to get killed with work in a shop you care about, and I'm not so sure that it is. You're full of your romantical notions— Oh, I know well what's in your mind, Darkie—you don't need to tell me—but mebbe in the end Alec's romances are as fine as yours, though they don't look so well in print. Anyway, I'm glad you're not in a disagreement with me about Dawson. There's no romance about him, good or bad; he's just a sponge."

Robert glanced around the shop and then glanced at his brother. Perhaps Brenda was right. Perhaps these pots and pans filled Alec with a passion that could be called romantic. Anything might be romantic if you chose to think it so. But at the end of it all, a man had to have some satisfaction. What satisfaction had Alec? His life had been spent in subordination to his mother and, now, to Brenda. The shop he had made and loved had been taken from him. The woman for whom he pined had been married to another man. In the evening, when his work was done, he went home and ate his supper and went to bed. In the morning, he rose up and ate his breakfast and went to work. He rarely read a book or saw a play. His walks on Sunday morning were solitary. The appalling thought came into Robert's mind that Alec had never in his life kissed a woman in the way of love. He had desired Brenda, but had never kissed her! . . . What in hell was the use of all this industry and devotion if it ended in a thwarted, unfulfilled, dissatisfied desire? . . .

Was he any more content than Alec? Was he, indeed, as content as Alec? Alec did get some pleasure out of this peddling of pots and pans, but what did he get? . . . He had seen Alec wandering about the shop, almost stroking the shelves with affection, and it was easy to see that pride burned in Brenda when she surveyed her shops and foresaw her future. But what did he, Robert, get out of this life? A wry smile passed across his face when he reflected that he enjoyed the rough life on ships better than he enjoyed this life of comfort and prosperity. To lie in one's berth in the half-deck while the sea poured in and soaked! . . .

Daft, of course, to believe that that was a happier experience than this commercial career, but daft or not daft, the thought remained.

II

And it grew. Why should he not resume his seamanship? Brenda was prosperous and becoming more prosperous. The work he did for her, another could do and do better. There was satisfaction for him at sea, but there was no satisfaction for him here in this shop and as little satisfaction for him in the semi-detached villa at Bloomfield which, Brenda was already hinting, would not house them for long. A villa in its own grounds at the Knock or Newtownbreda or perhaps up the Antrim Road was now the object of her desire. She could foresee the day when he and she would live in Fortwilliam Park! . . .

He said to her, "Brenda, what would you say if I was to take the notion of goin' to sea again?"

She gaped at him. Then she said, "I'd say you were out of your mind!"

III

Dawson died three months after he entered Brenda's service. The blow to his pride had been fatal to his life, and he quietly faded away. He made no complaint about the adversity which had pursued him after he had sold his shop to Brenda. A singular silence fell upon him.

"Very well," he said when Brenda announced her plans to him, and thereafter he did what he was told, but did not speak about it more than he was obliged to.

"He's failin' on it," his daughter said, but no one believed her until suddenly one morning he dropped the brush with which he was sweeping out the shop, and sat down in a chair and died. He looked at Brenda and put his hand to his heart and gave a little gasp and died. . . .

Brenda was frightened. Her courage and her determination fled from her, and she staggered away from the dead man, her face very white and her hands shaking. "I'm afraid of the dead," she whispered to Robert, as she shut the door of the counting-house and buried her head in her hands. "Get him away quick!" she moaned.

Yet out of this small disaster came advertisement. The Coroner elicited the fact that the firm of Dunwoody, at some sacrifice to themselves, had bought Dawson's business and saved Dawson from bankruptcy. They had also given Dawson employment, despite his failing health! . . .

"They're decent people, the Dunwoodys!" was frequently said then.

Robert had flown to the wareroom where Sadie was employed, to fetch her to her father. She had risen, blanched and tearful, from the sewing-machine at which she was working when, accompanied by the manager, he had entered the long room, in which half a hundred girls were stitching cuffs and collars, and had told her of her father's death. He had a jaunting-car outside. If she would put on her hat and coat, he would take her to the shop! . . .

In a little while she was ready. He took her down the stairs from the wareroom to the street, fearful lest she should faint, and helped her on to the car and

then, still afraid that she might faint, climbed up beside her instead of seating himself on the other side of the car.

"You must just bear up," he murmured, feeling that he would do better to remain silent, since words were comfortless.

The police were present when she reached the shop, and so was a doctor. The policemen were portentous, and busy with their notebooks. "Just like me," Robert thought, "takin' orders for delf! . . ." An inquest would have to be held, despite the doctor's suggestion that since Dawson had been ill for some time and under medical attention, an inquiry would not be necessary. The Coroner would be sure to think differently and therefore they must get all the information they could. "Now, miss, was your father in good health when you saw him this morning? . . ."

"Yes, sir!" Sadie replied.

There she was again, with her sirring! Trouble made her servile. Sirring a peeler! My God Almighty, sirring a peeler! She could stand there, in the presence of her newly-dead father, and abase herself before a peeler.

"Had he anythin' on his mind?" the policeman was inquiring.

"Aye, but wait a bit," Alec interrupted. "I don't see that it's any business of yours to be cross-questionin' the girl. The crowner'll do that. You're a peeler, not a solicitor!"

The policeman snapped his notebook, and muttered something about not needing any instruction in his duty, while Robert gazed in admiration at his brother.

The mild Alec had taken the puff out of the peeler. That was the spirit! If Alec had always behaved like that! . . .

"Your duty," Alec was saying, "is to send for the morgue-van an' take him to the dead-house. It's no part of your duty to stand there, makin' yourself out to be somebody!"

There was more in Alec than Robert had ever imagined. He knew how to put peelers in their place! . . .

He turned away while the business of removing the dead man to the morgue was performed. He looked into the counting-house and saw that Brenda was still seated at the desk, with her head in her hands. More women's terror! He opened the door and whispered to her, "They're just takin' him away!" but she did not raise her head.

"Tell me when he's gone!" she moaned.

He returned to the shop, and stood by the counter. The body was being carried through the crowd that stood thickly in front of the door. Well, that was the finish of Dawson! Bankruptcy had no further terrors for him! He could lie in his grave and disregard debts and duns and be indifferent to the need for self-respect and pride and the good opinion of his neighbours. That was a quare thought, now! Up in the City Cemetery there or out at Milltown, thousands of men and women that were terribly perturbed about their pride and reputation while they were alive were lying in heaps and rows, not caring a damn about their reputation and their pride or what anybody thought of them. That certainly was a quare thing, to be living at one minute an' worryin' the head off yourself about peo-

ple's opinion of you, an' at the next minute, to be dead and indifferent. It was the quare oul' cod! When Dawson was taken up to the graveyard to be buried, he would mebbe have a remnant of his self-respect dangling about him an' he would look anxiously at all the other dead an' wonder what they thought of him until some corpse shouted at him, "Get into your hole in the groun', man, an' don't be always thinkin' about yourself!" Dawson would be in the quare oul' fluster until he learned the habit of the place! . . .

He was roused from his brooding by feeling his arm touched. He looked round and saw Sadie Dawson standing beside him. She had put out her hand to him like a child touching its mother. She did not say anything. She stood mutely and miserably before him.

"Weak!" he said to himself, as he looked at her. "Weak as water!" And then, "Somethin'll have to be done about her!"

IV

Mrs. Dunwoody solved Sadie's problem. She arrived at the shop while the commotion over the dead man's removal was at its height. "What's wrong?" she demanded of a boy in the crowd.

"A man dropped dead in Dunwoody's," he replied.

Her heart nearly stopped. She made no other inquiry, but pushed her way through the crowd until she reached the door where she arrived as the corpse was carried out. When she saw Alec by the side of the covered body, she moaned and muttered, "Robert?"

"Inside!" Alec answered roughly.

She waited until the body had been carried past her,

and then she hurried into the shop. Robert was standing with a strange girl at the counter! . . .

"What's happened?" she demanded, and he told her.

"Oh, my poor girl!" she said to Sadie, turning to her and taking her in her arms. "It's lamentable, so it is! Lamentable!"

Sadie accepted her comfort as if they had known each other all their lives. She took sympathy wherever she could find it. Mrs. Dunwoody's solicitude for her was such as she had not enjoyed for a long time, and she let herself be lapped in it, feeling its folds about her as if they were warm wraps. That flabby old man, her father, had never comforted her as this strange old woman was comforting her. His petulant complaints had been her evening entertainment for several years. Sometimes, when she heard him fussing and fuming, she felt a frightful desire to slap his flabby face and fly from him and never return. What she needed most in the world was to be cherished and loved and considered, but her father gave her no comfort or love, but demanded, instead, that she should comfort and cherish him. She would sit patiently at the table, buttering bread for him, and listen while he informed her at great length of his abilities and of the strange perversity of fate that prevented him from using them. There wasn't a boy in the school he had attended that could beat him at the books. The master himself acknowledged that there was nothing he could teach him. And yet other boys with the half of his accomplishments had surpassed him in the world and were making mints of money! That fella, what's his name, that had the line of ships running backwards and forwards across the channel—she knew rightly who he

meant only she was too provokin' to remember—well, whatever his name was, he was the dunce of the school and a fearful fella for mitchin'! Failed in his examinations twice when he was in the fourth class and only got put up to the fifth class because the inspectors were ashamed to keep him down in the fourth any longer! Yet he was head of a shipping company, while Dawson that won prizes was keeping a hardware shop and damn near bankrupt, too! . . .

These comfortable arms, held round her by the old woman who, she now discovered, was Mr. Dunwoody's mother, were more to her taste than the fretful company of her father. Sadie liked to be comforted and cared for! Odd that the first consequence of her father's sudden death should be this unexpected comfort offered to her by a total stranger! She hoped that it would continue! . . . The door of the counting-house opened, and Brenda came out. "Is that you, Mrs. Dunwoody?" she said wearily.

"What ails you, Brenda?" Mrs. Dunwoody inquired. "You're not lookin' like yourself!"

"Didn't they tell you?" Brenda replied.

"About the man dyin'? Aye, they told me. Here, what about this girl? It's her that's in trouble!"

When Mrs. Dunwoody had heard Sadie's story, that her father was her last relative, she insisted that she should return to Donaghreagh with her. "You're in no state to stay in that house by yourself," she said, "an' a taste of the sea-air'll do you a power of good. Don't distress yourself, Brenda, about this lamentable business. People die every day, an' sudden an' short or long an' lingerin', what's the differs! Get yourself ready, girl," she continued, turning to Sadie. "I come

up for the day, but sure it's no matter—I'll go home again!"

Alec came bustling into the shop, alert and efficient. He had successfully disposed of a corpse! . . .

"Well, mother," he said, "this is a nice set-out! You thought it was Robert, didn't you?"

"For a minute! . . ."

"It wouldn't have mattered so much if it had been me, mebbe?" he said, with a sudden access of bitterness.

"Oh, quit, Alec, quit! Do you not see the lamentable state of this poor girl here that you start pityin' yourself?" She turned to Robert. "Will you bring us to the station?" she said. "Alec an' Brenda'll look after the shop all right!"

"There'll be the inquest," Alec reminded her. "The peelers'll want her—Miss Dawson, I mean—to give her evidence!"

"Well, you can tell them where she is when they ask for her. There'll be no inquest the day, anyway. Are you ready, daughter?"

"Yes, Mrs. Dunwoody!"

Brenda recovered herself. "She can't go like that," she insisted. "She'll need mourning, and there's her home to see to!"

"Have you any black by you, daughter?" Mrs. Dunwoody asked of Sadie.

She had remnants of mourning garb worn for her mother.

"Then we'll go to your house an' get them. Robert'll come, too, an' help us to carry whatever you require. Are you ready, Robert?"

"Yes, ma," he said.

And in a little while, Sadie Dawson was installed in the cottage in Donaghreagh where she remained after the inquest was held and her father was buried.

"Such a queer thing for your mother to do," Brenda said.

"What's queer about it?" Robert asked.

"Well, she doesn't know the girl—a perfect stranger!"

"She knows she's in trouble. I daresay that's enough for her!"

"All the same it's queer. Well, come on, we've our work to do!"

V

One day, while Robert, who now travelled to towns that were not far enough away from Belfast to prevent him from returning to his home in the evening, was in the train journeying to Whitehead, after an hour or two spent in soliciting orders in Carrickfergus, he looked out of the window of the railway carriage and saw a sailing-ship, with a full spread, beating out of the Lough. Suddenly the sun caught her sails, and she glistened in the sunshine, beautiful and white, as she dipped in the sea. He sat, with his notebook neglected on his knee, and gazed at her as she moved towards the open water. An unendurable longing filled his heart, and he leant against the window and watched the water curving up from the white ship's bows and trailing in long white lines behind her. Some one spoke to him. He heard a man's voice saying, "Lovely, isn't she?" and he heard himself replying, "Aye, she's lovely!" He sat at the window, gazing at her until the train drew him out of view of her. Then he picked up his notebook from his knee, and tried to make a

neat copy of the orders he had received in Carrickfergus. "A crate of crocks for Mr. Cairns of Carrick!" That had a funny sound! "A crate of crocks for Mr. Cairns of Carrick! All of assorted sizes! A dozen toilette sets! . . ."

"I wonder," he said to himself, "where she's goin'?"

To Australia, mebbe. To-night, when he was lying in bed with Brenda, that boat would be drifting down the Irish Sea. A boy would light the binnacle-lamp, and a man would take a trick at the wheel. The officer of the watch would call his commands, and the men of the watch would spring to obey them. Ropes would be hauled, and sails would be furled and unfurled. In the darkness, a sailor would look up aloft and see the stars whirling through the heavens, and in the daylight, he would see white clouds beating across a blue sky or gray clouds or black clouds coming heavily towards him with their thunders and rains and their winds that whacked the waves until they leaped over the bulwarks and tried to drown the ship. For a moment or two, it seemed to him that he heard a chantie. He listened. "A crate of crocks for Mr. Cairns of Carrick. All of assorted sizes. A dozen toilette sets for Mr. Cairns of Carrick. All of the same sort! . . ."

He put his notebook away. Presently the train stopped in the station at Whitehead, and he got out and walked down to the sea. The sailing-ship was no longer white, for the sun had hidden behind a cloud, but she came spinning along at a nice pace. By the time he had done his work in Whitehead, she would be well down the Lough! . . . He hurried through the shops he had to visit, entering the orders in his book with particular care because he felt himself excited and

knew that he might easily make mistakes, and then, when he was quit of his business, he went back to the sea and watched the ship come riding down the Lough.

The wind was fresh and steady, and she moved quickly through the water. He waited until she was abreast of where he stood, and then as she passed him, he followed her until he found himself climbing over the rocks to the Gobbins and Black Head, and could climb no further. He sat for a long while and watched her fade out of his view, nor did he move even then. The dusk descended. Steamships moved away from the Lagan, and came horning down to the mouth of the Lough. Their mastlights flickered in the darkness, and great streams of yellow light flowed out of their portholes and fell into the tide! . . .

He shivered in the cold wind, and then remembered "A crate of crocks for Mr. Cairns of Carrick. All of assorted sizes. A dozen toilette sets. All of the same sort. . . ."

He rose at last, and walked back to Whitehead where he found that he must wait more than an hour for a train to Belfast. He would be very late when he arrived at the semi-detached villa at Bloomfield. Brenda would wonder what had happened to him. Should he tell her that he had sat on the rocks at the Gobbins to watch a ship going out to sea? She would think that very queer of him! . . .

She did. "My heart was in my mouth with fear," she said. "I thought mebbe the train had had an accident. I thought you'd been hurt or something. I didn't know what to think. And all the time you were sitting there, like a great gawk, gaping at the sea!"

He ate his supper in silence, afraid to retort to her,

lest he should wound her with bitter words. After all, she was in the right! He had caused her to feel anxiety!

"Ship-mad!" she was saying.

No, he must not give way to the temptation to taunt her. He must eat his supper and hold his tongue.

When they were in bed, he with his back to hers, both of them bitterly silent, he felt compunction and he wanted to turn to her and say that he was sorry. But he did not move. Ridiculous not to tell her that he was sorry when that was what he wanted to do. But he did not speak until, with a cry, she turned to him and putting her arms about him, said, "Why do you torment me, Darkie, when you know I love you?"

Then he twisted round in her arms and kissed her. "I'm sorry, Brenda," he murmured. "I didn't mean to torment you!"

"And you never said you were sorry for upsetting me!"

"You angered me," he replied.

"Still, you should have said you were sorry. It's the man's place to apologise first!"

She snuggled against him, and lay so long in silence that he thought she was asleep. But presently, in a slow, sleepy voice, she spoke. "You don't want to go to sea again, do you, Darkie?"

"No-o!" he answered, but she was too tired to hear the doubt in his tone.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

I

PROSPERITY poured upon Brenda. She had not yet achieved her ambition to see the name of Dunwoody written over a shop in every town in Ulster, but she had already the satisfaction of seeing "Agent for Dunwoody" on many of them. Her aptitude for buying and selling was extraordinary. Business was a duty to Alec, but it was a wild delight to Brenda. There came a point in her pleasure when, having got the better of a business rival, she would willingly have returned her profit to him so that they might fight again. When she conned her banking account, she regarded the mounting money, not as money, but as victories. That sum meant the rout of that person; this sum meant the terrible defeat of another; and this little sum here, scarcely to be seen among the bigger amounts, was especially dear to her, for it signified a fight in which she had almost suffered loss. Only at the last moment, and after a hard struggle and deep anxiety, had she plucked victory from the battle! . . . She now frequently lamented that she was a woman. What could she not do if she were a man? There were certain things that women were prohibited from doing merely because they were women. Yet she was as capable of performing them as was any man she knew. She was handicapped to some extent by her sex. Men con-

fabbed together in places and in circumstances which were not possible for her. She found herself feeling self-conscious when she had to attend a business meeting and discovered herself to be the only woman present. She would approach the door in which the meeting was to be held, and would hear the men laughing and talking easily together, and immediately after she had entered the room an air of constraint enveloped everybody. The laughter died down or became nervous and unmirthful, and the talk ceased to be easy and became formal. At first, when she attended these meetings and expressed an opinion contrary to that of the other persons present, the men deferred to her in a way that made her feel that she had been insulted. It was as if they had said to her, "Of course, Mrs. Dunwoody, you are a woman and we would not dream of contradicting you, so we will treat you as if we shared your opinion, but, of course, we haven't the slightest intention of acting on it. You're a woman and very able for a woman, but *we* know best about these things. Now, like a good creature (and a nice-looking one, too, if you'll excuse the familiarity) will you just sit quietly there in the corner and listen while we settle the matter!" She had soon caused them to abandon that attitude towards her, although one fellow had had to be severely treated before he realised that she was not playing at business! . . . A sharp turn of the screw and a swift slump in his banking account had brought him whining to her feet and thereafter, though he loathed her, he was like putty in her hands. Alec was a great help to her. He knew what ought to be done, but he had no authority in him and therefore could not compel other people to accept his suggestions. But

Brenda realised the soundness of his suggestions, and she never attended a business meeting or made a proposal for action without first thoroughly discussing it with Alec. He quickly became nervous in company. Opposition did not stimulate him; it made him irritable and caused him to cease from fighting with a querulous, plaintive, "Well, have it your own way, then!" He would actually let himself be defeated when victory was in view in pure petulance!

"Alec's a masterpiece at getting the right notion into his head, but he's a footer at getting it into any other person's," Brenda once said to his mother, and Mrs. Dunwoody nodded her head.

The word "footer" was now frequently in Brenda's mouth. She sharply divided the world into two groups, those who were "footers" and those who were not, and her contempt for the first group was only equalled by her delight in the second. She had no pity for failures. She had too much pleasure in success. As she became more and more immersed in her business, her pride in Belfast became more and more a proclamation of its greatness. The biggest shipyard in the world was in Belfast. The biggest ships in the world were built in Belfast. The biggest linen-mill in the world was in Belfast. The biggest tobacco factory in the world was in Belfast. The biggest ropeworks in the world was in Belfast! . . . She easily acquired the Ulsterman's contempt for the Southern Irish. Dublin, although she had never been in it, was a city full of "footers." She had formerly been impressed by the social importance of Dublin; it had a sort of royal court, and was frequented by nice people, many of whom were titled; but now she called it a poor-plucked

sort of a place, full of clever-clever, talky-talky fellows, none of whom would earn ninepence a week in any city inhabited by real people.

"Fancy the like of us being governed by the like of them," she would say when Home Rule was discussed. "Talky-talky corner-boys, that's all they are! All mouth and no mind! If their heads were as long as their tongues! . . . No, I was never in Dublin. What would I go there for? When I go anywhere, I'll go to a real place!"

She fascinated Robert. He no longer regarded himself as her husband. He was her employee. He felt for her the proud affection which a young clerk might feel for his employer. A boy who was a designer at "the Island" spoke of Mr. Pirrie to Robert one night at a church conversazione to which Brenda had taken him. "That man's a masterpiece," he said, his eyes glowing as he mentioned the great shipbuilder's name. "He knows how many rivets there are in every ship he builds. He can do anything he likes with the sea! . . ." Robert looked at the eager, glowing boy and suddenly thought to himself, "He thinks about Pirrie the way I think about Brenda! . . ." Yet she bewildered him. He was puzzled, indeed, by the Brenda who had grown out of the Brenda he first knew, but still more was he puzzled by the fact that the new Brenda seemed to have no existence outside the shops. When the shutters were fastened and the lights were extinguished and the doors were locked and Brenda took his arm as they set out for the ferry that would carry them across the Lagan to the County Down station, it seemed to Robert that he left the business Brenda in the shop and met the neat Brenda, all reti-

cence and refinement, in the street. She became again the delicate creature who hated to hear of the coarse facts of life and was embarrassed by any reference to birth. In High Street, she was hard as steel; at Bloomfield, her manners were mincing. In the shop, she talked of nothing but her business affairs, but at Bloomfield she repeated pieces of gossip culled from meanly-printed little magazines in which paper patterns alternated with scandalous revelations about "people in society" and puerile accounts of the way in which royal personages passed the time. She cultivated the clergy, and compelled Robert to go to church—which she hated to hear called "meeting"—on Sunday morning. She had failed to make him wear a tall hat and a frock coat, but she did not despair of success. "You owe it to yourself," she would say to him. "I say nothing of me, only of you! It's a man's duty to make the most of himself, every whit as much as a woman's! . . ." She was glad that Robert had refused to join an Orange Lodge, for she had discovered that nice people, although they publicly approved of it, did not belong to the Orange Institution. "It's all very well for the lower classes on the Twelfth of July!" she would say, "but the better classes can't mix themselves up with that sort of thing!" She frequently spoke of the lower and the better classes! . . . If Robert felt like joining a society—he had no wish to do so, but she was hinting at her own desire—he might become a Free Mason. A much better class of person, it appeared, was to be met in the Masonic Societies than in the Orange Lodges. And what did he think of this new game that was becoming so fashionable? What game? The game of golf which, according to a piece in the last number of

the *Lady's Weekly Budget,* was pronounced "gowf." It was a Scotch game, but English people were getting very addicted to it, and there was talk, she heard, of starting a course or links round about Neill's Hill . . . When they were at Portrush that time, she had greatly longed to see Robert going round with a bag of clubs under his arm. She had a queer fancy to see him in a knickerbocker suit. He would look as well in it as the best! . . . They might go to Newcastle this summer and stay at the big hotel built by the County Down Railway. They might get to know nice people! . . .

II

It annoyed her, although she could not say why, that Mrs. Dunwoody should have kept Sadie Dawson with her at the cottage in Donaghreagh. "She'll lose her place at the wareroom," she urged, but Mrs. Dunwoody replied, "She's lost it already!"

"Then she should be looking for another one," Brenda continued.

"The girl's in trouble an' needs a rest. An' I need some one to help me in the house," Mrs. Dunwoody retorted. She now was mistress of the cottage in which formerly she had been a lodger. "She suits me, an' I suit her! She's quiet an' amenable an' does her work!"

Brenda could not think of another objection. Nevertheless, Sadie's presence in the cottage offended her.

"You'll find it very quiet in Donaghreagh," she suggested to Sadie when Mrs. Dunwoody was out of the room. "And you used to a city, too! The winter nights are the worst, with the wind whistling round the

house and the sea splashing over the wall and wetting everything!"

"I don't mind where I am," Sadie replied. "Places are all one to me!"

"And of course," Brenda went on, "the longer you stay away from your work in the wareroom the harder it'll be to go back. You'll lose the knack of it!"

"There's a sewin'-machine here," Sadie said.

Brenda gave up. "Well, you know best," she said, "but if I were you, I'd think twice before I gave up my good place in the wareroom. Mrs. Dunwoody's an old woman and won't be spared to us for ever. If anything was to happen to her! . . ."

She did not finish her sentence, nor did Sadie press her to do so. Sadie was content with her lot and had no wish for another. She would not trouble trouble until trouble troubled her.

"It's my opinion," Brenda said to Robert as they sat in the train on their way back to Bloomfield, "that girl's not the gumph she lets on to be!"

Robert teased her. "I never thought I'd hear you usin' a word like 'gumph'," he said.

"You know rightly what I mean," she crossly retorted, "and I think you might have supported me instead of standing up for the girl. I'll drop a hint to Alec in the morning, so I will!"

But hints dropped to Alec were useless. Brenda's determination might be adamant, but Mrs. Dunwoody's was adamant, too. Sadie remained at Donaghreagh.

Nor was Brenda's effort to persuade her mother-in-law to move out of the cottage into one of the new semi-detached villas near the Warren successful. There was no more ambition in Mrs. Dunwoody. She was

content to be what she was. She smiled wryly at Brenda as she said, "You've got enough ambition for the whole of us. You're doin' grand, Brenda, an' you'll do grander still. In a wee while, you'll have your heart's content, a big house an' a big business, an' you'll be looked up to an' well respected. What more can you desire?"

"Nobody knows what they desire," Brenda unexpectedly replied.

Mrs. Dunwoody hesitated for a moment or two before she spoke again, and when she did speak, she did not say what was on the tip of her tongue. *That* subject would never again be mentioned by her.

"Aren't you happy, then?" she said instead.

"Oh, yes," Brenda answered decisively. "Very. I have a good business and a good home and a good husband! . . ."

"Husband?"

"Yes, Robert!"

"Oh, aye!" said Mrs. Dunwoody, "Robert! I'll be forgetting my own name next!"

Brenda laughed. "Anybody'd think to hear you," she said, "that Robert wasn't my husband!"

"Aye, wouldn't they? Or mebbe they'd think I'm near dotin'!"

Their talk ranged away to other matters, and did not return to intimacies for a long while. When it did, Mrs. Dunwoody suddenly said, "Does Robert ever talk of goin' to sea again, Brenda?"

"Not now. Once or twice he did, but that was only talk, and I soon put a stop to it. He seems well content with his work."

"I'm glad of that!"

"And he does it well, too," Brenda said with pride.

"That's fine. I meant him for a minister! . . ."

"I doubt if he'd have made much of a minister," Brenda interrupted. "And besides, there's not such a lot in ministering nowadays. My mother used to say the pulpit was nothing to what it was in my father's time. There isn't the respect paid to ministers there used to be!"

"Well, well!" said Mrs. Dunwoody. "Do you tell me that now?"

III

It was during one of her Sunday visits to Donaghreagh that Brenda decided to develop her business in the Peninsula. Not an inch of a railway in the whole of it, and only a long car or two to bring the farmers' wives to Donaghreagh and Ballyards. Robert must take a trip or two through the Peninsula and spy out the land for her. Orders dribbled in to High Street from the shops in Killisland and Ballyquintain and other villages, but they were poor, spiritless orders and denoted that the shopkeepers had no enterprise, and were content to wait until people asked for things, instead of creating a demand for them. What Brenda would like to know was whether it would be better to buy up the shops already established or start a travelling van that would carry every kind of hardware to the very doors of the farms. Robert could come down to his mother's cottage one morning, explore one side of the Peninsula that day, sleep the night in the cottage, and explore the other side the next day. Brenda would spend the night in the Pottinger's Road

shop with Mattie and Alec. It would give her a chance to talk over things quietly with Alec, away from the interruptions of High Street. The plan, when it was mentioned to her, commended itself to Mrs. Dunwoody. It was a long time, she told herself, since she had had Robert to herself. She would be able for one night to take her son's arm and walk with him, no other person disturbing them, as far as the lighthouse or up the road past the Warren, and feel for a little while that he was her son again, unshared with any other person. She excited herself over the visit, and talked of it to Sadie Dawson as if she had not seen Robert for a long time. "I'll tell you," she said, "for I know you'll not let it go any further. I wouldn't say it to another livin' soul, but Robert's my heart's darlin' an' I love him more nor all my childher. It was him I slaved an' screwed for an' then I lost him. He run away from me, an' I never had sight nor sound of him for seven years, but I knew he'd come back to me, an' he came back. I married him til Brenda! . . ."

"Didn't he want to marry her?" Sadie interrupted.

"Eh? Oh, yes, he wanted to marry her, I daresay, but it was me made the match. All the comfort I had in the world was Robert, but what was the use of all my plannin' an' schemin'? Nothin' comes out the way you want it. Brenda—that's my daughter-in-law—is in a great way of business, but she's no wife til Robert!"

"But she's in love with him, isn't she?"

"Aye, she's in love with him right enough, a quare, greedy kind of a love. I can't make her out! I can't make her out! But no matter for that! I'll have Robert til myself for a wee while, an' mebbe now an' again

he'll be let come here by himself, an' him an' me'll walk the way I always wanted to walk with him, quiet an' easy in the evenin', just me an' my son!"

Robert arrived earlier than she had expected. His work on the east side of the Peninsula had been more easily and quickly done than he had anticipated. If he got through the whole of it as well, he would be able to spend an hour or two with her before going back to Belfast! Brenda was very busy. She had a scheme on that was likely to improve her fortune by sinking a rival's. The man was behaving like a fool, too, underestimating her ability because she was a woman. "I'd like to see him sunk for that," Robert said.

"You've great admiration for Brenda, son?" said Mrs. Dunwoody.

"I have," he replied. "I can't get over her at all. I never dreamt she had a head on her like that. Did you, ma?"

"I never thought Brenda a fool," she answered. "She's clever enough, though mebbe Alec's head is as useful as hers in the business."

"Oh, Alec's got his head screwed on the right way, but he hasn't got the gumption she has. How is that girl, Sadie Dawson, doin'?"

"Oh, rightly, son, rightly! She does what she's told!"

He sat between his mother and Sadie at supper, and listened while his mother talked. Sadie did not speak. She attended to their needs. He saw that she was shy with him, and her shyness made him shy, too. The sea-air had done her good. Her cheeks had filled and were a pretty colour, and he thought that her eyes were brighter. He was glad the poor creature was staying with his mother. She needed a proper home

and good food and air and rest. If she continued to grow pretty, one of the young fellows knocking about Donaghreagh would take a fancy to her. Before long perhaps she would be a married woman.

"What did you say, ma?"

He found that he had not been listening to his mother.

"I was sayin' we'd walk the len'th of the lighthouse an' back," she repeated.

"Will Sadie come?" he said.

"No. She'll stay and redd up the things. You've told me nothin' at all about how you got on the day. Wait 'til I put on my bonnet an' cape, an' then we'll go thegether. Sadie, girl, get me my bonnet an' cape!"

Sadie ran into the bedroom at the back of the cottage to do as she was bid.

"She's lookin' well on it," Robert said, when she had gone.

"Aye, she's greatly improved," his mother replied.

Sadie returned, carrying the bonnet and cape, and helped her to put them on.

"We won't be long!" Mrs. Dunwoody said to her, as Robert and she stepped into the street.

They crossed the road and sauntered by the side of the sea-wall. The tide was high, and a splash of moonlight fell upon it. The night-air was warm, though a little breeze blew about them as they slowly walked towards the lighthouse. Neither of them spoke. Now that she had her son to herself, she found that she had nothing to say to him. It was enough that he was with her. They sat for a while on a sheltered seat, and then, without a word, they both rose and turned towards home again. He looked at her, hanging on his arm,

and thought to himself, "She's feelin' her age!" but he did not say anything. Her heart was heavy. To herself she said over and over, "He's not content. He doesn't speak, but he's not content!" Suddenly she turned off the Shore Road and led him up to the Presbyterian church in the Killisland Road.

"What is it, ma?" he said, puzzled by her sudden move.

"Nothin', son!" she replied, holding him more firmly. "I just had a notion to go this way!"

She halted before the railings in front of the church. "That was where I wanted you," she said. "Isn't it quare an' comic?"

He laughed. "Aye," he said, "it would read comic enough if you saw my name on that board. 'Reverend Robert Dunwoody (D. V.) will preach in this church next Sunday mornin' an' evenin' '!"

"It didn't seem comic to me then, but it's terrible comic now. Let's go home, son."

Sadie was sitting by the fire when they returned. The firelight glowed about her and made her seem prettier than she had appeared at the supper-table.

"Away to your bed, Sadie!" Mrs. Dunwoody said to her, when she had removed her bonnet and cape. "You must be tired!"

"No, Mrs. Dunwoody, I'm not tired," she replied.

"Well, away to your bed anyway!"

And, murmuring "Good-night!" she went.

Then, until she was too tired to sit up any longer, Mrs. Dunwoody and Robert talked about the prospect of developing the business in the Peninsula. "My notion," he said, "is to open a big shop here or mebbe in Ballyards, an' send a caravan up an' down the coun-

try. I'm not sure that isn't Brenda's notion, too. An' if it's a success, we'll extend the idea to other places."

"Margaret's goin' to have another child, Robert!" she interrupted.

"Oh," he said, "Sam an' her are goin' in for a lengthy family!"

"Aye. Pedens an' a Shillington, but no Dunwoody. What time do you want your breakfast, son?"

IV

He returned to Belfast on the following evening, and made his report to Alec and Brenda. "I'd like to study the place a bit more," he said. "I'm not sure what's the best to do, buy a shop in the centre of the Peninsula or forage about with a van. There's a lot of trade to be done there. I'd like to have two or three days to go through the country systematic!"

"He's beginning to take an interest in the business, Alec!" Brenda said delightedly. "Well, go again next week," she continued, turning back to Robert, "and take your time over it. There's nothing much doing up here at present, and the change in the country'll do you a world of good!"

"Very well, Brenda!" he said, and a week later he was back at the cottage in Donaghreagh. His mother was out when he arrived, but Sadie told him that she would not be long. She was visiting a neighbour. "Will I go an' bring her?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "you needn't trouble yourself!"

She paused for a moment, and then said, "Will I wet the tea for you or will you wait till Mrs. Dunwoody comes back?"

"I'll wait. Do you like bein' here?"

"Oh, yes! Very much! Mrs. Dunwoody's very kind."

"You don't want to go back to Belfast, then?" he asked.

"No, never! I'm content here. Is there anything you want?"

"No, thank you, no! Sit down an' take your ease. You're always up an' about, doin' things."

"It's my work," she replied.

"Well, there's no need to kill yourself! I suppose you know a brave few people down here now?"

"One or two," she said.

Silence. Not very communicative, he thought. If that's all she has to say for herself, there can't be very much lively talk here. A soft-lookin' thing. No spirit in her. Ready to cry at a minute's warnin'! . . .

She rose and walked to the door. "But she's good-lookin'," he thought, as he watched her moving. . . .

"Here's Mrs. Dunwoody now?" she announced from the door.

Mrs. Dunwoody came in. "You're earlier, son, nor I expected you to be. Did Sadie entertain you well?"

"Entertain? Oh, aye, aye! She offered to make the tea for me, but I said I'd wait for you to come in!"

"Wet it now, Sadie," said Mrs. Dunwoody, as she went into the bedroom to take off her outdoor clothes.

He sat quietly by the fire while Sadie busied herself with the kettle and the teapot. As she brushed past him, he was aware of an agreeable sensation. Woman! Odd how he sometimes had that queer feeling now, a desire to touch a woman's hand, to fondle her. He would come out of the dark street into a lamplit shop,

and see a girl standing behind the counter, and instantly, although he might never have seen her before, he would feel himself stirred with a desire to take her hand in his, to caress her. He used to feel like that about Brenda. Suddenly he would catch a glimpse of her in the villa at Bloomfield—never in the shop—and immediately he would wish to embrace her. Brenda liked to be kissed, but very gently. "You're so rough, Darkie!" she would say to him when he pressed his lips to hers too fiercely. "I don't like roughness!" Then she would show him how she preferred to be kissed. Her lips would lightly touch his, so lightly that he could scarcely feel them. "There," she would say, "that's how I like to be kissed!"

She seemed, to him, not to be kissing at all! . . .

This girl, Sadie, appeared to him suddenly more womanlike than any woman he had ever known. He wanted to take hold of her and kiss her, but he was afraid to put out his hand and touch her. This was a most extraordinary sensation. Sitting here, while she stood close to him, pouring water from the kettle into the teapot, he felt singularly aware of her. He was not easily able to express his emotions, and his mind fumbled for words with which to explain to him what it was he felt about her. He repeated the word "Woman" to himself. He knew nothing else about her than that she was a woman. Brenda had views and opinions and business ability. That girl, Clara, she was woman enough, but other than woman, too. This girl, this Sadie Dawson, moving away from him now, to the table, was woman only. If she had opinions he did not know what they were, nor did he seem likely to discover them. She had worked in a wareroom, and

she had kept house for her footering father, but neither of these occupations were of any significance. She had been put to them. It was an accident that took her to a wareroom, and not to a shop or a restaurant. She had not said to herself, "I will go and work in a wareroom because that is what I want to do!" . . . She seemed to him to be the most placid person he had ever encountered. Even her tears, when she had wept over her father's impending bankruptcy and his death, had been placid tears and easily dried. "She stays where she is put," he told himself. "She doesn't need to help herself because she is so helpless that everybody will run to help her!"

His thoughts were interrupted by the return of his mother to the kitchen.

"The tea's near ready," she said, as she surveyed the table. "That's right! Thank you, Sadie!"

They drew their chairs up to the table and ate the meal. What was the news? Mrs. Dunwoody demanded, and, bit by bit, he told her the little details of his life since he had last seen her. Brenda was pretty certain to sink the rival who had treated her with indifference. The man was getting nervous. Already he had given a squeal or two. Brenda was implacable and pitiless. He felt frightened sometimes when he saw her set her lips tightly together when that man's name was mentioned. You would hardly think that Brenda was cruel! . . .

"Will you have some more tea, Mr. Dunwoody?" Sadie said.

He pushed his cup towards her. He wanted to say, "Call me Darkie or Robert, the way the others do!"

but did not say it. He was half in the mind to start "codding" her. Could he possibly make her laugh? The way to "cod" girls was to torment them about their boys! . . . No, that would not do. She would stare at him like a dummy and then say, "Can I pass you a piece of soda farl, Mr. Dunwoody?" Why did he bother about her? The girl was really only a sort of servant to his mother, a soft, silly sort of a girl. A gowler! A girner! If he was to say anything sharp to her now, she would probably burst into tears and look at him reproachfully. Then he would feel bad! . . .

Now Brenda was a different sort of a woman altogether. Brenda had her soft times, but she had hard times, too. Brenda could stand up to a fellow, just as she was standing up to the fool who had belittled her, and get the better of him in fair fight. But Sadie would always throw up her hands and beg for mercy. If she won any fights, it would be because people had not the heart to hit her! . . .

Why didn't the girl say something?

His mother was rambling on about this and about that. She sometimes regretted that she had withdrawn from her shop, but generally speaking she was glad. She was old, and the old liked to return to the place where they started. Wasn't it queer, that? You might wander the world over, but in the end you would want to come back to the place where you began. It would be terrible to want to come back and not to be able to! . . .

There she was, that Sadie, sitting and saying nothing.

But her eyes were fine and her colour was pretty! . . .

"Do you want to go for a walk, ma?" he said, when

the supper things were removed, but "No, son!" she said. She was tired. She felt more like going to her bed. "But you go, if you want to!"

He put on his hat and went out. It would be a relief to get away from that softy with the melting eyes. There was no light in the sky, and the sea looked very dark as he strode towards the lighthouse. The wind was gusty, and it sent the water splashing against the sea-wall with a cold, cheerless noise. As he looked towards the Three Islands, he could see the lights of the Liverpool boat, as she came down from her berth to the sea. Some one on board had friends in Donaghreagh, for the syren sounded as the ship passed close to the shore, and then swung round the corner into the open water. . . . He made for the Killisland Road, and walked briskly along it. What in hell was he doing here, running round the country with a notebook, taking orders for crockery, when his place was out there on the water? . . . That girl, Sadie, with her soppy face, and Brenda with her hard desire for success, and Alec with his devotion to the shop, and Margaret with her babies, and Mattie withdrawn into her son, and his mother mourning over what she had missed—what did they all matter to him when the one thing in the world that he wanted, to be back on the sea, was the one thing in the world that everybody was determined he should not have. Well, wasn't he a poor mouth of a fellow himself, to be pulling a face like this when he had only to go back to Belfast and say to Brenda, "Here, Brenda, I've had enough of this. There's your damned wee notebook! . . . I'm off to sea again. I've had enough of this sort of successful livin', an' I don't like it. You can have your shops an' your prosperity

an' your well-respectedness an' men takin' off their hats to you an' sayin', 'Oh, yes, Mrs. Dunwoody!' an' 'Oh, no, Mrs. Dunwoody!' an' 'Whatever you say, Mrs. Dunwoody!' By God, Brenda, with all your cleverness an' your ability an' your masterful ways, you haven't got the common courage to have a child. You're afeard, Brenda, to make life. You can make money, Brenda, but you can't make life. You're terribly tidy an' neat, Brenda, an' you're scared to the marrow that if your belly was to get big, you'd look untidy an' not be neat! . . ."

He stopped and shivered. The wind was blowing coldly off the sea. Something must have come over him, to make him walk all that way, mutterin' to himself, an' sayin' foolish things about Brenda. He leant against the stone wall to recover himself. That building between him and the sea must be the church on the edge of the water, where he had met Brenda that time long ago, when he was a wee fellow, an' she told him that she was in love with him. What a desperate long time ago that seemed? And Brenda had loved him then; loved him all the time that he was roaming the world without ever giving one thought to her, loved him still, loved nobody and nothing but him. She did not want to give any of her love to a child. All of it was for him! . . . He turned away, touched by his thought of her single devotion. That was beautiful! He had not thought before of the strength and duration of Brenda's love for him. Now he loved her for it! He walked rapidly back to Donaghreagh, and presently found himself at the door of his mother's cottage. He lifted the latch and went in. Sadie was sitting by the fire.

"Where's my mother?" he said, too shy to use the less formal word "ma" to her.

"She felt tired, an' she went to her bed. Will you put out the lamp an' bolt the door?"

"Very good!" he said, bolting the door as he spoke.

"Do you want anything before I go up?" she continued.

"No, thanks!"

He turned down the wick of the lamp, and as he did so she lit her candle.

The light in the lamp flickered and jumped and then went out.

"Good-night!" she said.

"I'm comin'," he said. "You can give me a light of your candle upstairs."

She walked up the stairs, and then stood at the top of them to light him up. He stumbled over a stool as he walked across the kitchen floor.

"Have you hurt yourself?" she said, leaning forward.

"No," he answered.

He climbed the stairs towards her. A soft, pretty thing she looked, with no pluck in her at all. Anybody would want to take care of her, to put his arms round her and protect her. As he came near to her, she turned and walked along the little landing to her room.

"Good-night!" she said again, holding the candle so that he could see his way to his door.

"Good-night, Sadie!" he said, calling her by her name for the first time. Then he put his arms about her and kissed her. "Oh, don't!" she said, but she did not resist him when he drew her into the room.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

I

He returned to Belfast at the end of the week and found Brenda in high spirits. Her rival had capitulated. "If he hadn't, I'd have smashed him!" she exclaimed with a little hard, exultant laugh. He had come to her offering to let bygones be bygones, and assuring her that he had no wish to be hard on a woman. "Don't consider my sex," she had replied. That dashed him a bit. He fumbled for words for a minute or two, and then said, "Well, now, Mrs. Dunwoody, isn't it better to work together than to work in opposition? There's room in the world for the two of us!" "I wonder if there is," Brenda murmured! . . . It seemed that he got rattled at that and ceased to be the condescending male merchant with extraordinary rapidity. He did not continue to address Brenda as if she were a bright girl saying a piece of poetry at a tea-party, but abruptly treated her as one hard-driven, hard-fighting merchant treats another. What was her game, eh? What did she think she was up to, eh? Did she think she could bounce him out of his business! Let him tell her he had been in the hardware trade when she was in her cradle. Aye, and let him tell her, too, that he would still be in it when she was in the Bankruptcy Court, an' mebbe when she was in her grave. Brenda gravely

listened to him until he had exhausted his powers of vituperation, and then she smiled at him and said, "I'll buy your business from you!"

"I thought for a minute he'd hit me," she said to Robert, as she related the story to him. "He went red and then white in the face. 'I'm not selling my shops!' he answered me. 'Well, what are you doing with them?' I answered him back. 'It looks to me,' I went on, 'as if you were trying to give them away!' That finished him. He seized a hold of his hat, and said, 'Good-day to you, mem!' and walked out of the shop. Yesterday morning he came back and agreed to my terms. I got the better of him, Darkie!"

"You took a terrible risk, Brenda!"

She nodded her head. "And it frightened me, too, but I nerved myself up to it, and the minute he began the kind old gentleman trying to make things nice for the foolish young girl, I knew I had him in the hollow of my hand. I enjoyed myself, I tell you. It gave me the queer thrill to see him go red and then white!"

Her absorption in the business was now intense. Her conquest had established her in important shops in good distributing centres. She began to travel. She visited Enniskillen, Strabane, Derry and Ballymena, undeterred by the fact that Robert could not accompany her, and she startled Alec with the suggestion that they should consider seriously the question of buying one of the motor vehicles that were being talked about so much. "No, not one of those toy things for taking trips into the country. A delivery-van!" If it turned out all right they might buy several motor-vans! . . .

"Your mind leaps ahead of itself," Alec exclaimed.

"I see us in Fortwilliam Park sooner than I thought we'd be there," she replied complacently.

"You're greatly set on gettin' on, Brenda!" Alec said, gazing at her with admiration.

"I am, Alec. I hate poverty and poor ways. I want the best that's goin'. Ever since I was a child I wanted to be among the high-up people. It's a queer thing to me that you Dunwoodys with all your abilities haven't got more ambition in you. Your mother has the pluck of a hundred men in her, but she gave out, and there she is, content to pass the time in that wee white-washed cottage down at Donaghreagh when, if she'd applied her mind to it, she could be living in a big house at Belmont, mebbe, or up the Malone Road. What came over her, Alec?"

"I don't know. Robert, I think!"

"Robert! Aye, Robert! There's a puzzle-the-world. He takes no pride or pleasure in getting on. There's no heart in him. Times, Alec, I nearly imagine he's laughing at me when I tell him how well we're doing!"

"He'd never do that, Brenda!"

"Ah, there's ways of laughing at a person that you'll never know about. Robert's never once asked me what money we have in the bank. Never once! Wouldn't you think curiosity would make him want to know? He doesn't know to this day what we're worth. He doesn't care, Alec! Can you understand that?"

"He was always contrary, Brenda. He never wanted anything we wanted. God only knows what he does want. I'm his brother, an' older than him, an' I've tried hard to play an older brother's art to him, but it was never no good. And here we are, the two of us, gettin' near the end of our time! . . ."

"Robert's young, Alec!" Brenda indignantly interrupted. "And so are you, for the matter of that! Don't add years to yourself!"

"I don't feel young, Brenda. I doubt if I ever did feel young. I can't mind a time when I wasn't oppressed with a sense of my responsibility. I had a widowed mother an' two young sisters an' a young brother. When I was a boy, Brenda, you may not believe me, but many's a time I knelt down an' prayed til God til enable me to do my duty by them."

"And you did it, Alec!"

"Aye, I did it. An' what was the thanks I got? Robert was preferred before me every time. I've not wanted many things in my life, but I never got one of them. I've no ambition left, Brenda, except to do my work here as well as ever I can. That's all. Your ambition is all the ambition I have!"

"Thank you, Alec!" she said.

They remained silent for a few moments, and then, with an odd little sigh, Brenda shook herself and said, "Listen, Alec, what do you think of this scheme?" . . .

And presently they were poring over paper and conning calculations.

II

Robert had not been to Donaghreagh for more than a month when he received the note from Sadie. She was coming up to Belfast for the day and wished to see him. Would he meet her just inside the Free Library in Royal Avenue at twelve o'clock? . . . At twelve precisely, he walked up the steps and found her in the entrance hall. She looked anxious and agitated and

he could see that she had been crying. You had to pity her, he thought, as he came up to her.

"Oh, Robert," she whispered to him, "I'm heart-feard!"

"Heart-feared of what?"

"I don't know. I . . . I think I'm goin' to have a child!"

Her tears came, and she turned her face away so that passers-by might not see her.

"A child!" he repeated blankly.

"Yes!"

He took hold of her hand. "All right, Sadie!" he said.

He looked around him. Was there some place where they could be quiet? . . . He led her into the museum at the back of the Library, and they wandered round the room, gazing at flints and petrified wood recovered from Lough Neagh, until they found a corner where they could talk without being heard.

"Are you sure, Sadie?" he said.

She shook her head. "I only think so, an' I'm afeard!"

"Aye!"

"Oh, Robert, supposin'! . . ."

"Steady yourself, Sadie. Cryin' your eyes out won't help! Have you said anything to anybody?"

"No."

"Did you go to a doctor?"

"I didn't like to," she replied.

"Then that's the first thing to be done." He moved towards the door of the museum. "Come on!" he said.

"Will you go with me?" she whispered.

"I will!"

They left the Library together, and stood in Royal Avenue for a few moments uncertain in which direction to turn. He did not wish to take her to a doctor who might recognise him, and for a while he thought of going with her to Lisburn or some other town immediately outside Belfast where they were unlikely to meet any one they knew, but finally he decided to take a tramcar up the Falls Road, the Catholic quarter, and look out for a name-plate with a Catholic name on it. "There'll be no risk, then, of us bein' known," he said.

"But, Robert," she said, "he'll know I'm not married to you!"

"Why will he?"

She held out her hand so that he might see her ringless fingers. "Does it matter?" he demanded.

Tears came again! . . .

"All right," he said, "I'll buy you a ring! You'll have to come into the shop with me an' try one on!"

She hesitated for a while before she agreed to do this. "It doesn't look like the thing," she said, and added, "Mebbe the man behind the counter'll suspect what we want it for!"

"I don't care whether he does or not," he replied.

They left the shop and walked towards the Junction where all the trams in the city met, and while they walked, she slipped the wedding-ring on to her finger. He helped her into a tramcar and sat beside her, without speaking until they reached the Model School in Divis Street. "We'll get out here," he said. "There's a doctor's house somewhere about. I mind seein' it one time! . . ."

They left the tramcar, and presently found the doctor's house. "This'll do!" Robert said to her.

She held back, and he saw fear in her eyes. "It's no good funkin', Sadie! If you're in for it, you're in for it. So put a brave face on you. Come up to the door with me!"

She followed him, and stood by his side while he rang the bell, which was answered by an elderly woman who invited them to come in and wait. The doctor would not be long.

They sat in the waiting-room for a few moments, neither speaking, and they were summoned to the surgery.

"Well!" said the doctor.

"We want to know if she's goin' to have a child?" Robert replied.

"Aha!" said the doctor, glancing sharply at him. He looked at Sadie's hand and saw the wedding-ring. "If you'll just wait," he continued to Robert, "I'll let you know! . . ."

III

Sadie was sitting in the surgery when he was summoned back to it. She had nearly dressed herself, and he saw that her fingers were trembling as she fastened the remaining garment.

"Is she?" he said.

"Yes," said the doctor.

"How much do I owe you, doctor?"

The doctor named his fee, and Robert took money from his pocket and paid him.

"Thank you," he said, and turned to Sadie. "Are you ready?" he asked.

She stood up, and he saw that the drawn look on her face had deepened. She moved towards him, without speaking, and the doctor opened the door for them.

"Well, thank you, doctor!" Robert said, as they passed into the hall.

"Oh, not at all," the doctor replied, "not at all!"

They emerged into the street, and turned towards the centre of the city again.

"What in the earthly world'll become of me?" Sadie moaned.

He put his arm in hers. "Whatever you do, hold yourself thegether. It's no good gowlin' about it!"

"But I'm frightened! . . ."

"I suppose you are. My God!"

"What'll I do?"

"Do! What can you do? . . . No, no, I didn't mean to snap at you, Sadie, but I'm tryin' to think what's best to be done, an' you distract my mind when you just talk for the sake of talkin'! As far as I can see, there's only one thing to be done. We'll have to tell Brenda! . . ."

She uttered a cry, and put her hand to her mouth. "I daren't do it," she said. "She can't bear me. She never could bear me. An' I can't bear her! . . ."

He gazed at her in astonishment. "What makes you think that?" he said.

"I don't need to think it. I know it. She hates the sight of me, an' God knows I bear her no good will, with her hard eyes! . . ."

"That'll do! You needn't talk that way about her. You an' me are in the wrong as far as she's concerned, an' we'll do no good by attackin' her. You'll be guided by me. You'll want somethin' to eat!"

"I couldn't touch a thing! . . ." she began.

"For the love of Christ, Sadie, don't act the child. You're a woman, an' you're goin' to have a baby. Well, pull yourself together an' behave like a woman an' stop girnin'!"

"You'd cry if you were me!"

"Mebbe I would. Well, don't cry anyway. Come in here, an' get a sup of milk. It'll steady you. An' when you're quiet, we'll go to the shop an' see Brenda!"

"No, Robert!"

"Yes. We must tell her the truth. She must know before anybody else knows."

She protested no more. "Very well!" she said. "Whatever you say!"

He led her into a confectioner's shop and they sat at a little round, marble-topped table, sipping milk and nibbling at buns. Then he paid the bill, and they walked down Divis Street and Mill Street, across the Junction to the shop in High Street. The distance was short, but it seemed to Robert to be interminable, although to Sadie it seemed too brief. There were no customers in the shop when they reached it. An assistant was standing behind the counter, and Robert could see Brenda's head bent over a ledger, as she sat at a desk in the counting-house. She looked up as he entered and smiled at him through the glass top of the partition, but the smile died when she saw Sadie.

"Mr. Alec's at his dinner," the assistant said.

Robert did not reply to this. "Come on," he said to Sadie.

Brenda was standing at the open door of the counting-house. There was a frown on her face. "I thought

you were never coming," she said. "We'll be late for our dinner."

He remembered now that they were to have eaten their meal together, for this was one of the days when they were free to do so.

"I was kept," he said.

She turned to Sadie, but she could not bring any geniality into her speech, though she tried to speak in a light tone. "And what brings you here?" she said.

Sadie did not answer. She looked appealingly at Robert, who moved forward to enter the counting-house.

"Is anything wrong?" Brenda demanded.

"Yes," Robert replied.

Brenda retreated into the counting-house, and Robert and Sadie followed her.

"Has anything happened to your mother?" Brenda said.

"No."

"Then what in the name of goodness! . . ."

Robert shut the door of the counting-house. "Listen, Brenda," he said. "I've something to tell you that'll hurt you! . . ."

"Hurt *me!*" she interrupted.

"Aye. I've only just heard about it myself! Sadie's goin' to have a child!"

She did not answer immediately, but she stared at her husband and at the shrinking girl by his side, as if she knew all that there was to know.

"Oh," she said at last, and then, "Well?"

"I'm its father, Brenda!"

"You're its father?"

"Yes."

The silence was torn by Sadie's tears. Brenda's face was very white, and presently her fingers began to writhe. Her eyes hardened, and her lips seemed suddenly to dry and wither. She leant against the desk and her fingers closed on a pen which she bent against the ledger until it broke.

"Are you going to have a child by him?" she said to Sadie.

Sadie raised her tear-stained face and then, unable to speak, nodded her head.

Brenda straightened herself. The hard eyes became harder, but her fingers did not writhe now. "Will you please leave my shop?" she said to them. "Both of you. Now!"

Alec appeared at the street-door, returning from his dinner.

"What's the matter?" he said, as he entered the counting-house in which there was now scarcely room for any one to turn round.

"Robert's brought his fancy-woman to pay me a visit," said Brenda.

"Fancy-woman!" Alec exclaimed.

"Yes. She's going to have a baby by him! . . ."

Alec swayed against the door. "By the livin' God," he said, as he raised his clenched fists. "By the livin' God, I'll have the heart out of you . . .!"

"Wheesht, Alec!" said Brenda.

His fist fell to his side. "Oh, well!" he said.

Robert remained irresolute. No one spoke though Sadie's subdued sobs continued. There seemed to be no more to say, yet it was impossible to go without further speech.

"We can't settle this now," he began.

"Settle it! How can it ever be settled?" Brenda interrupted.

"I don't know, but this doesn't seem the finish of it. I'll take her back to Donaghreagh, an' then I'll come back! . . ."

"You needn't trouble. I don't want to see you again. I've done with you!"

"Very well, Brenda!"

He turned to leave the counting-house. "Come on, Sadie!" he said to the weeping girl who rose as he spoke and followed him.

"I hope you're proud of yourself," Alec exclaimed bitterly.

"Proud!" said Robert and then, saying no more, left the shop with Sadie trailing behind him.

Alec turned to Brenda. "This is a queer end to things," he said, "a queer, demented end to everything."

IV

Mrs. Dunwoody was standing at the door of the cottage when Robert and Sadie approached it. "Robert!" she exclaimed joyfully, but her joy died when she saw his expression.

"What ails you both?" she said, as she stood back to let them enter.

"Me an' her!" Robert replied, putting his hat down on a chair. "She's goin' to have a child, an' I'm the father of it."

"Oh, my God, Robert! . . ."

"Aye, ma!"

"But Brenda! . . ."

"Brenda knows. I told her an hour ago!"

Sadie stood by the door, as if she were afraid to sit down, uncertain of her welcome.

"Sit down!" he said to her.

She looked at his mother as if asking her for permission.

"Sit down, Sadie," Mrs. Dunwoody said.

"She came to me this mornin' an' told me," Robert continued, "an' I took her to a doctor up the Falls. It's true enough. Then I made her come to the shop with me, an' I told Brenda. I had to do that. She ordered us out of the shop. Her an' me is finished!"

"There'll have to be a settlin'," his mother protested.

"What sort of a settlin'?"

"A hundred an' one things! Is there no way of solvin' this trouble?" she insisted.

"None that I know! . . ."

Sadie rose, wringing her hands and stood before them. "Get her to divorce you so's you can marry me!"

"It 'ud take an act of parliament in this country to divorce any person. Didn't you know that?" Robert said.

"Well, get her to get one!"

"That'll have to be done if it can," Mrs. Dunwoody said. "Come here, daughter," she said to Sadie, "an' sit down by the side of me. You're no younger nor I was when I had Alec, but somehow you seem younger. Quieten yourself."

"Are you not angry with me, Mrs. Dunwoody?"

"Angry, daughter! What would be the use of that? I'm neither pleased nor sorry. I am content. I wanted Robert to settle down, an' make a home an' have children, an' I tried to get my desire by marryin' him

to Brenda. But I did not get my desire that way. An' I thought I never would get it! But now, unaccountably an' for no reason, I'm to have a gran'child that has him for a father. It's comin' to me the way I didn't expect it, but there it is. I'm too old an' tired to be tormented any more by what is the right way an' what is the wrong way for things to happen. They happen, an' there it is! I'll go to Belfast in the mornin' and talk to Brenda. Mebbe she'll be amenable to me!"

But Brenda was not amenable. Her fury was cold and quiet, but it could not be abated. "He'll never marry her while I live," she said. "Never, never!"

"Then what will you do, Brenda?"

"Do! What would I do? Attend to my business. There's nothing now in the earthly world to deter me. My mind's on my shops and on nothing else. I'll make my name known in the length and breadth of the land! . . ."

"Your name?"

Brenda stopped and stared at her. Then, very defiantly, she said, "Yes, my name. I've made it the name you wanted to make it. Why wouldn't I call it my name?"

"I was wrong to encourage you to marry Robert. Alec wanted you. You should have married him," Mrs. Dunwoody said.

"Marry Alec! You know as well as you're standin' there, I'd never have married anybody but Darkie, no one in this world but Darkie. I've loved him since ever I set eyes on him. I wish to my God he had been drowned at sea like his father, for then I'd have gone to my grave, loving him still, and no one could ever have taken his memory from me. I'll never look at

him again, not as long as I live, but he was my heart's desire, and mebbe it's enough that I had him for a while, though I've lost him now."

"Is that all you have to say, Brenda?"

"That's all. Have you that girl staying with you?"

Mrs. Dunwoody nodded her head.

"Well, perhaps, that's natural," Brenda continued. "She's a poor, cringing sort of a woman that a man'll stand by. She'll hold him better than I could."

"I wonder will she. He's talking already about going to sea again. I'll not strive to prevent him!"

"He was always one to go his own way. You couldn't prevent him, an' I couldn't prevent him."

Mrs. Dunwoody got up to go. "You should 'a' been my daughter, Brenda," she said, and suddenly she put her arms round her. "I'd give the world this not to have happened, but it has happened, an' there's an end to it!"

Brenda did not speak. She clung to the old woman, while sobs shook her.

"We're the same breea, you and me," she said. "Strong, striving women that never get what they want!"

V

Sadie's eyes were dry now. She did not weep any more. Her life had been ordered, and there was no mutiny in her heart. She was to live with Mrs. Dunwoody as if she were married to Robert. The decision was made for her, and she liked to have decisions made for her. There would be talk, of course, but talk ceased. In time, perhaps, people would forget that she was not lawfully Mrs. Robert Dunwoody. She

would be able to say to any who inquired, "My man's at sea!" Robert had settled to go to sea again. He had heard of a ship that was to sail from Liverpool to California. If he could not get a job aboard her he would get a job on some other ship. There was always a ship sailing to somewhere.

"I wish to my God I'd stuck to the sea from the start," he said to his mother. "I never was happy nowhere else. If I'd gone aboard a boat the way I wanted to, Brenda could have had her shop, an' I'd 'a' come back to her when my trips were finished, but she wanted her desire an' no other person was to have his!"

"Don't belittle Brenda, son!"

"I'm not belittlin' her. I pity her that she's married to me that never fell in with her wishes. That's the way of me. I can't fall in with no one's wishes. I must go the way I want to."

"Come out an' talk to me, son!" she said, unwilling that Sadie, contentedly moving about the kitchen, should participate in these last hours before Robert left for Liverpool.

They walked by the sea-wall and sat, as they had so often sat before, under the lighthouse.

"There was a man at sea with me one time," Robert murmured, "that said we were all misfits, the like of us. Charlie was his name!"

"The one that fell from the mast an' was killed?"

"Aye! I told you about him. He belonged to a high-up family, but he could not content himself at home, and he went wanderin' the world 'til he was killed. Misfits, he said we were."

"Will you wander the world, too, Robert?"

"I suppose so."

"You'll not go away from me this time, an' never tell me where you are?"

"No!" He looked at her, and suddenly laughed. "I believe you're a misfit yourself," he said.

"Quit!" she replied, taking hold of his hand.

Compunction filled him. "I'm a sore disappointment to you," he said.

"You are. Yet I never loved any one in the world the way I love you, an' I never will. It doesn't matter to me now what you do or what you say, I'll love you while I have breath in my body, an' when I'm dyin', Darkie, I'll pray to God to let me go on lovin' you the same for ever!"

He pressed her hand in his. "I wish I could be the son you want me to be, but I can't!"

"I know," she said, "so I'll content myself with the son you are!"

"Does Brenda know you're goin'?" she asked.

"Alec told her."

"Will she be at the boat, do you think?"

"No, I don't want any one there. I'll go by my lone."

They returned towards the cottage. In a little while, he would have to leave Donaghreagh. Sadness fell upon him, as he took his mother's arm in his, and he felt terribly solitary.

"Don't go in yet, son," his mother said, as they approached the cottage. "Walk on!"

She pointed to a grassy place above the rocks, near to the swimming baths. "I'll sit there," she said, " 'til the boat sails past, an' I'll wave my hands to you though it'll be dark, an' mebbe you'll see me!"

"I'll tell the captain to sound the horn as we go by!"

"Do, son!" She glanced around her. "You'll come back til this place yet," she continued. "Your own earth has a powerful hold on you, an' it draws you to it."

They went back to the cottage, and presently left again to go to the station. Sadie walked with them, but it was Mrs. Dunwoody who held his arm and clung to him. Sadie was content. She knew what her life was to be, assured and comfortable, and that was all she desired. She was to be taken care of!

"Will I tell Brenda anything?" Mrs. Dunwoody whispered to him.

"There's nothin' she'll want to hear about me!"

"You love her, son?"

"Yes, ma, I love her! That's the quare thing about me! I love her!"

She left the carriage, and stood with Sadie on the platform while the train drew out of the little absurd station that looked like a room into which the train ran. They could see him, standing at the window, until the train turned the curve and went out of sight. Then they went home.

VI

Later in the evening, Mrs. Dunwoody went down to the rocks by herself and waited for the boat. The night air made her shiver, and she drew her cape closer about her, and huddled against the wall. Lights flickered on the sea, and across the water she could see the lamps of Whitehead gleaming against the dark hills. She felt cramped and cold, but she did not move from her place

until the Liverpool boat came gliding round the corner. She stood up and waved her handkerchief. The syren sounded. Its long wail droned across the sea to her. She turned and stumbled back to the road, though her legs ached and her breathing was difficult. She followed the ship as it sailed towards the lighthouse, half-walking, half-running, but she could not keep pace with it.

She sat down on the shore, and watched it sailing south to Liverpool. It looked very lovely in the dark with lights shining from its sides and its masts. The white trail of water behind it spread and faded. The darkness grew deeper. The lights began to diminish and become faint, and while she strained her eyes to see them, she heard the syren sounding again, a long, deep sound that beat upon her heart. "Oh, my son," she said, stretching out her hands to the receding ship, "my dear, dear son!"

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